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# **Managerial practices and perception of how music affects customers' shopping behaviour: an insight from clothing retailers**

Bachelor's thesis within Business Administration

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## Bachelor's Thesis in Business Administration

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### Abstract

**Background** Several researchers have studied atmospheric factors like crowding, colours, music and olfactory cues and tested their effect on shopping behaviour. In the particular case of the influence of music in consumers' behaviour, several notable observations have been made.

Yet, the majority of the studies have focused on the phenomena of the music and the influences of its different factors towards consumers' behaviour but little research has focused on managerial awareness of such effects on its consumers. Thus, there are still a lot of doubts about manager's practices and perception regarding the use and effects of atmospheric music.

In line with the approaches mentioned above, this thesis intends to fill this gap in the literature through the attainment of two objectives: the first one is to study what exactly clothing retailers are doing in terms of atmospheric music and the second objective is to examine their implicit theories about the impact of the music on consumers' shopping behaviour.

**Purpose** The purpose of this thesis is to study managerial practices and perceptions of how music affects customers' shopping behaviour in clothing retailers in Sweden.

**Method** This study employs a qualitative method. The Data was obtained through semi-structured face to face interviews with managers and staff of clothing retailers in Jönköping. These interviews were conducted in clothing stores located in the two main commercial areas of the city where the majority of the stores were located.

**Conclusions** Our research found that in the big retailers the atmospheric music is used in a more systematically way than in the small ones. This level of systematization is directly related to the level of centralization in decision-making and to the size of the store.

On the other hand, with regards to our second objective we found that

not only managers but also the salespersons working in the clothing stores have a high degree of knowledge about how music affects their customer's shopping behavior. Some of their implicit theories coincided with what previous researchers have found while others didn't.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

As it is stated by Yalch and Spangenberg (2000), Philip Kotler “introduced the view that retail environments create atmospheres that affect shopping behaviour”. (p.139). In this document (Journal of retailing in 1973), Kotler states that “one of the most important recent advances in business thinking is the recognition that people, in their purchase decision-making, respond to more than simply the tangible product or service being offered”. In the same text the author assures that “One of the most significant features of the total product is the place where it is bought or consumed. In some cases, the place, more specifically the atmosphere of the place, is more influential than the product itself in the purchase decision”. (Kotler, 1973, p. 48)

The illustration below explains how the diverse elements of the environment influence non-verbal responses, which in turn affect a consumer’s shopping behaviour.

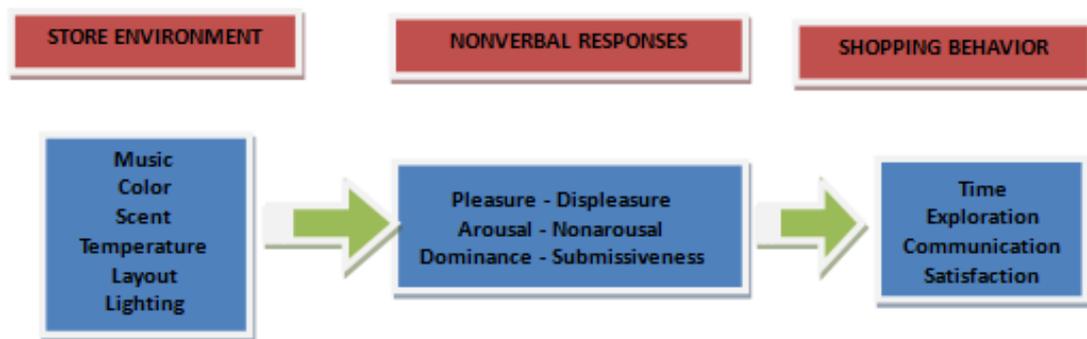


Figure 1.1 A framework integrating store environmental factors, nonverbal responses, and shopping behaviours. Source: Yalch and Spangenberg, 2000

Other studies have also observed atmospheric factors such as crowding, colors, music and olfactory cues, and tested their effects on shopping behaviour (Yalch & Spangenberg, 2000). In the particular case of the influence of music in consumers’ behaviour, which is the interest of the current study, several notable observations have been made. For example, Yalch and Spangenberg (2000) published an article about a study that focused on “whether store music influenced shoppers’ emotional states and, if so, whether these emotional states subsequently affected shopping behaviour” (p.140). Meanwhile, Eroglu, Machleit and Chebat (2005) explored “the simultaneous effect of instore density and music on shopping behaviours and evaluation. Specifically, it is proposed that the interactive effect of retail density and background music tempo will have a significant influence on customers”. (p. 579).

All of the studies mentioned above, focus primarily on the phenomena of the music and the influence of its different factors towards consumer behaviour. Yet, despite the many studies that have been made on the subject, little research has focused on managerial awareness of such effects on its consumers. Areni (2003) for example states that “little

is known about the extent to which current industry practice coincides with, or runs counter to, actual findings in the academic literature” (p.162).

In this sense, DeNora and Belcher, 2000 made a study related to the subject where it was “drawn upon ethnographic research in and around High Street retail outlets to examine music’s role in shaping consumer agency” (p.80). After this research, Areni has been one of the few authors that have studied the effects of music towards consumers as perceived by managers. However since his publications in 2001, 2002 and 2003, no research has been made about managerial practices or perception of the music effects on costumer’s behaviour. In the following chart, it will be summarized the different publications made by Areni, regarding this topic.

Areni’s Publication	Abstract
<p><b>Areni, C.S. (2001a). Examining the use and selection of atmospheric music in the hospitality industry: Are managers tuned-in to academic research?</b></p>	<p>This publication focuses on the level of knowledge that managers in the Australian Hospitality Industry have regarding the use of atmospheric music. It intends to compare the industry practices with the academic research. As a result, this research found that “the managers of corporate chain hotels utilised sophisticated procedures and multiple criteria for selecting atmospheric music, whereas smaller, independent hotels and pubs relied on simple heuristics” (p.27).</p>
<p><b>Areni 2002, Exploring managers' implicit theories of atmospheric music: comparing academic analysis to industry insight</b></p>	<p>In this research the main objective was to explore the implicit theories that managers in the Australian Hospitality Industry (hotel, restaurants, pub) had about the effects of atmospheric music in consumer behaviour. They found that some of these implicit theories were supported in previous academic research; however, there were some others that weren't. These emergent theories suggest that music for example should follow circadian rhythms, encourage or discourage social behaviour, and helps to block the background noise. (p.161)</p>
<p><b>Areni 2003 (a) Examining managers' theories of how atmospheric music effects perception, behaviour and financial performance</b></p>	<p>This study was based on the emergent theories found in the aforementioned research as well as on established theories in the literature in order to create scales to measure hospitality managers’ beliefs about the effects of music on perception, behaviour, and financial performance. One of the featured results was that managers who believed that music should match with the age segment, tended to think that atmospheric music didn’t affect financial performance. (Areni, 2003 a). (263)</p>
<p><b>Areni 2003 (b), Positioning strategy influences managers' beliefs about the effects of atmospheric</b></p>	<p>This research, continues in the same line that the others and complements them studying how positioning strategies affects managers’ beliefs of how atmospheric music could affect sales and gross margins. The research has as a main conclusion that positioning strategies do affect manager’s beliefs regarding the</p>

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**music on financial performance.**

music effects on financial performance.

The author also mention as a conclusion that *“hospitality managers believe that atmospheric music is important for creating an up-market image, but managers of budget establishments apparently fail to appreciate the potential impact of atmospheric music on revenues, gross margins, and profits” (p.16)*

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**Chart 3.2 Summary of Areni’s publications.**

In the past years, some authors have cited Areni’s publications in their researches, however when doing a revision of this new studies, it was found that none of them studied music’s effect from the managers perspective as Areni did.

Thus, there are still a lot of doubts about manager’s practices and perception of atmospheric music’s effect on consumer behaviour and whether or not the findings obtained in Areni’s studies could be generalized to other industry sectors, or if for example some changes on technology could have affect the use of music in the past few years.

In this sense, similar to the studies performed by Areni, this thesis will study managers’ practices and perceptions of the impact of the atmospheric music in the clothing retailers in Sweden.

We have decided to focus on the retail sector because as DeNora and Belchre (200) stated *“is one of the most appropriate settings for investigating the question of music’s effects..., where music’s use to structure purchase behaviour is relatively new ” (p.81 )*. In addition to this, we have found that over the past two decades there a have been a large number of research regarding the effects’ of music in retail stores. However, as we have said, only few have been devoted to study this subject from the managers’ point of view. Thus, the current research aims to study this aspect, having the Swedish clothing retail sector as the case study.

## 1.2 Specification of the problem

As it is explained in the background, ever since Kotler introduced the theory of atmosphere as a marketing tool in 1973, there has been a lot of research regarding to the effects of atmosphere in consumers perception, behaviour, sales, etc. While further studies have shown that Kotler's findings can prove to heighten a consumer’s shopping experience, little is known about how managers have been applying the theory in reality.

Some of the few studies that can be found about this topic are the ones aforementioned, conducted by Areni. However, his research was based on empirical analysis made with managers of Australian hotels, restaurants and pubs and as the author himself states:

*“It should be noted that the implicit theories generated by Areni (2002)...could be specific to the hotel and lodging industry. Future research should explore whether this set of explanations generalizes to other service and retail categories” (Areni, 2003 a, p.271).*

So, since his findings might be applicable just on the hospitality industry where he focused his research, and since no further research has addressed this issue, it could be concluded that there's still a gap in research concerning managers' practices and perception regarding atmospheric music and if these are connected to what literature says about this phenomenon.

Likewise at the end of his prior publication, Areni (2002) had also manifested that there were still some interesting questions worthy studying:

*“Is atmospheric music under-appreciated by professional service providers relative to retailers?... Do smaller, independent retailers use music less systematically and effectively than large chain retailers?” (p.180)*

Therefore, in line with the approaches mentioned above, this thesis intends to fill this gap in the literature through the attainment of two objectives: the first one is to study what exactly clothing retailers are doing in terms of atmospheric music and the second objective is to examine their implicit theories about the impact of the music on consumers' shopping behaviour.

### **1.3 Purpose**

The purpose of this thesis is to study managerial practices and perceptions of how music affects customers' shopping behaviour in clothing retailers in Sweden.

### **1.4 Delimitations**

This study will be conducted in the clothing retailers located in the city of Jönköping, Sweden. This delimitation is made since the city of Jönköping counts with the presence of a combine representation of both international well known clothing retailers as well as small local clothing businesses. So, even though the analysis and conclusions are limited to what was found in the clothing retailers located in this city, this sample may be generalizable to all Sweden. can be generalize to all Sweden since the stores behaviour are homogenous in every city.

### **1.5 Thesis structure**

#### **Chapter I**

This chapter offers readers an introduction to the topic of our thesis. In this section, the background and problem discussion present briefly what previous researches have studied regarding to our subject as well as the reasons that motivate our research. Subsequently, the purpose and delimitations of our thesis is introduced.

## **Chapter II**

This chapter presents the theories on atmosphere and the music factors that are used in the analysis of the empirical data. It begins with a general introduction to the topic and then it continues with the specific theory about music where it is presented the ten different theories that were chosen as the main basis of our study.

## **Chapter III**

This chapter describes how the study was carried out. It starts describing the type of research that was used in order to reach the research objectives. Subsequently, it is described the methods used for collecting and analyzing the necessary data needed to fulfil the purpose of this thesis.

## **Chapter IV**

This chapter presents the empirical data that was collected through semi-structured interviews in different retail stores in order to fulfil the purpose of our thesis. The findings from the interviews will be presented in two sections according to our two research objectives. The first part is devoted to practices regarding the use of the music and the second one is about the theories and perceptions of the effects of music on consumers' behaviour, following the ten theories that were explained in the theoretical framework. The Interview Guide can be found in Appendix 1.

## **Chapter V**

This chapter analyses the results presented in the previous chapter by comparing them to what had been investigated and found in previous researches.

## **Chapter VI**

The final conclusions of the study are presented in this section.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

*This chapter contains the theoretical approach on which this thesis will be based upon. The purpose is to better understand the main concepts and theories regarding our specific topic. Thus, first the effects of store atmosphere on shopping behaviour will be described briefly and then the effects of music will be explained in depth.*

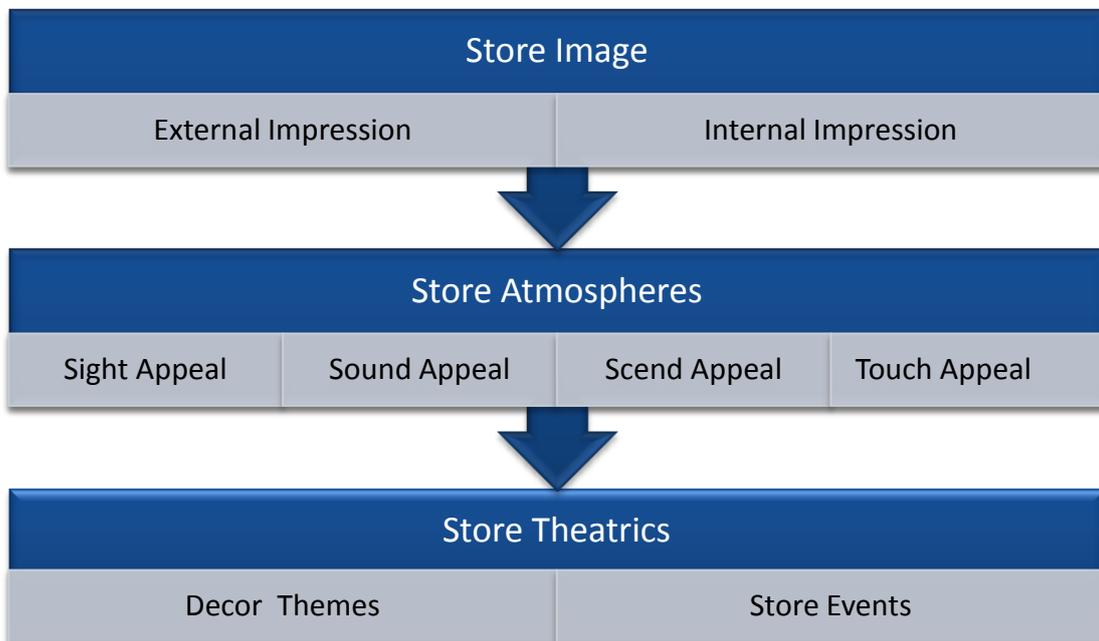
### 2.1 Atmosphere

In a colloquial level, the word “atmosphere” is used “to describe the *quality* of the surroundings” (Kotler, 1973, It is c p.50). It is common to hear expressions as “this restaurant has a good atmosphere” referring to the feelings that a physical surrounding can evoke (Kotler, 1973).

Kotler (1973) further suggests that the term “atmospherics” is “to describe the conscious designing of space to create certain effects in buyers. More specifically, atmospherics, is the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in buyer that enhance his purchase probability” (p. 50).

Other authors have also talked about concepts such as “store environment” which is defined by Zaharuddin as “the development of place concept that is focused on retail selling and directly to the final consumer (user).” (p.58)

According to Dale M.M, Lewinson, this concept has three elements as illustrated in the following graphic:



**Figure 2.1 Store Environment Concept Structure.**

Within the elements contained in the so called “Store Atmosphere”, several factors have been studied as well as its influences in consumer behaviour, some of these atmospheric factors mentioned by Yalch et al. (2000) are:

- Music
- Colour
- Scent
- Temperature
- Layout
- Lightning

For the current research, not all of these factors will be described in detail. As it is stated in the introduction section, this thesis will only focus in the Music factor and its effects on shopping behaviour.

## **2.2 The Music Factor**

Music could be defined “as a complex of expressively organized sounds composed of some key elements: rhythm, pitch, harmony and melody” (Priestley 1975, Alvin 1991. Cited in Lee, Chung, Chan M. & Chan W., 2005). However for some people music is much more than this definition. Music can mean many different things to each person. It has become a part of our daily lives, we listen to music when going to our jobs, school, when doing exercise, when having social events, etc. The genres and types of music has also changed trough the years and generations. But can music influence our mood or our way of thinking? Does music has a relevant impact in the way people think and act?

Many researchers have tried to answer these and other similar questions and they have studied the effects of this social element. In the end, they have found that music is a powerful tool that can affect the human being in different ways (Bruner, 1990). Among its different uses, there is one in particular of interest for the current study; this is music’s use and impact in consumer behaviour.

In this regard several researchers have found interesting findings. Just to mention an example among the many that can be pointed out, Eroglu, Machleit and Chebat (2005) found that “shoppers’ hedonic and utilitarian evaluations of the shopping experience are highest under conditions of slow music/high density and fast music/low density” (p. 577).

Following in this line of thought and what was stated in the problem discussion, ten theories will be explained which have been the research purposes of several academics, about how music affects customer perception and behaviour. These theories correspond to the implicit theories that were obtained in Areni 2002 and that were used by the same author in a later publication to build the interview model used in Arenis’s study in 2003 (a). Since, no research has looked into the implicit theories he identified, we have de-

cided to take these theories as the base to build our theoretical framework so that we could obtain results that could be then compared with the ones Areni got in his research.

### 2.2.1 Music influences costumers to buy according to the beat of the music

Several researchers have talked about how music affects the perception of the atmosphere in different places and contexts, for example Yalch and Spangenberg, (1993) say that “Many retailers and service organizations use some form of environmental music to enhance their atmosphere and influence customer behaviour.” (p.31)

In this sense, Caldwell (2002) says that “one of the more consistent findings of research into the effects of music on behaviour is that more arousing music leads individuals to carry out activities more quickly or spend less time on activities”. (p. 895). “The time relates to the desire to physically stay in or to get out of the environment. This relates to the decision to shop or not to shop at the store. It also might relate to the length of time spent in the store”. “Time is an important factor in retailing because retailers strongly believe in a simple correlation between time spent shopping and amount purchased. (Yalch, 2000, p.139)

According to this item, some theories are made in order to explain the way the beat of music influences customers. In the Service Sector, we can find authors who presented their research in this field. Some important findings from their studies are presented below:

- Smith and Curnow (1966) revealed that customers remain less in the stores when the music is high.
- Milliman (1982) demonstrated that music tempo affected the speed in which consumers moved around a store. Milliman (1986) later showed that the background music in restaurants affect the time customers remain into the place showing that slow tempo music leads to more time of customers in the restaurant but fast tempo music leads to less time.
- Milliman (1982) carried out research in a supermarket and reported that higher sales volume is due to slow music and lower sales volume were associated with fast music, in this order of ideas customers who stay longer in a supermarket tend to buy more than those who spend less time.

Milliman (1982), made an experiment with no music, slow tempo music and fast tempo music. The nine-week study, found that the slower shoppers move through the store, the more they buy. In contrast, the faster they move through the store, the less they buy. The relation of this finding with music is that slow tempo music made customers move slower and therefore buy more while fast tempo music accelerated the customers movement making them buy less.

### 2.2.2 **Music affects customers' perceptions of the atmosphere of an establishment**

In sectors other than retailer shops, theories have been made about the importance of the atmosphere. For example, Wall and Berry (2007) discussed this importance in a restaurant where he states that “although food quality is basic, the ambience and service performance greatly influence a customer's evaluation of a particular establishment. Beyond food quality, a key question in managing a restaurant is, "What is more important to customers-the behaviour of employees or the environment where they perform the service?" (p. 60).

Berry, Carbone, and Haeckel (2002) stated that there are important clues to have in account “Anything that can be perceived or sensed or recognized by its absence is an experience clue. Thus the product or service for sale gives off one set of clues, the physical settings offer more clues, and the employees through their gestures, comments, dress and tones of voice still more clues”. (p.86)

These clues are named: Functional, mechanical and humanic clues: Functional refers to the characteristics of the food, for instance if the food was good. Mechanical refers to the intangible characteristics of a service environment such as, equipment, color, light, etc. Humanic clues consist of the behaviour of service employees, including body language, tone of voice and level of enthusiasm. (Wall et al. 2007, p. 60)

Some examples could be mentioned of some establishments that have used the music to create a brand image. “In the Hard Rock Cafe, for example, customers are surrounded by authentic rock and roll memorabilia, such as a guitar signed by John Lennon or a leather jacket worn by Elvis Presley, hung on the walls. These mechanic clues help to establish the Hard Rock brand. As a message-creating medium, the atmosphere provides discriminative stimuli to buyers that enable them to recognize a restaurant's differences as a basis for choosing that restaurant” (Wall et al. 2007, p.61).

In the case of retailer stores, it has been demonstrated that the environment of a store gives an image of the local in general, Shama and Stafford (2000), “suggested that environment-based perceptions of a retail store can influence customers' beliefs about the people who work there, and that nicer environments are generally associated with more credible service providers. As a result, it is expected that customers' perceptions of mechanic clues will be positively related to their expectations of the service.” (Cited in Wall et al., 2007, p. 62).

Additional studies have also talked about the influence of music in customer perceptions of the shopping retailer. Baker (1994) made a study that “examines how combinations of specific elements in the retail store environment influence customer's inferences about merchandise and service quality and discusses the extent to which these inferences mediate the influence of the store environment on store image” (p.328). The author explains this theory with the figure below.

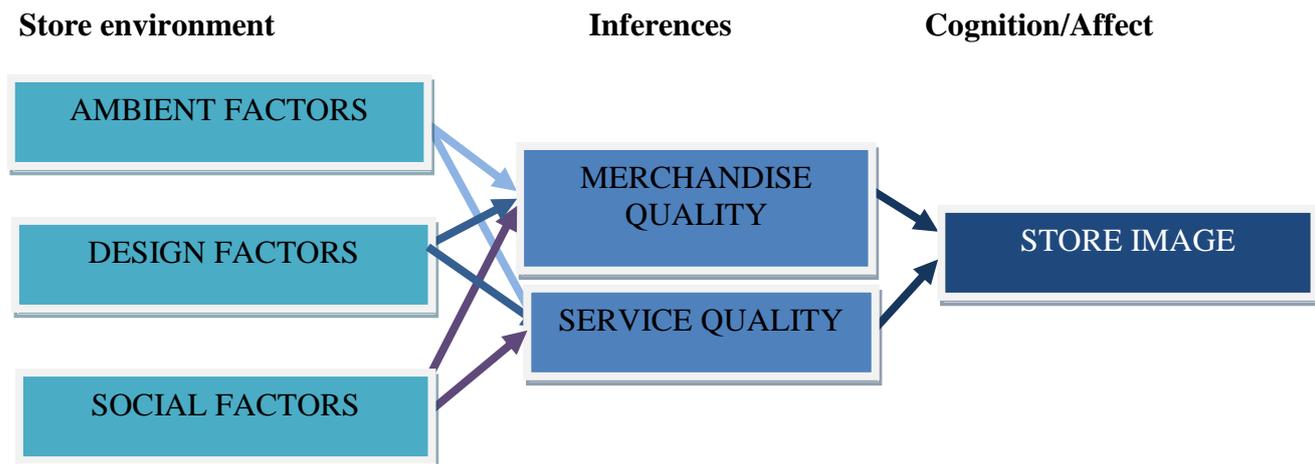


Figure 2.2. The influence of the store atmospherics on the store image. (Baker, 1994, p. 332)

### 2.2.3 Music must cater to the references of different age segments

“Music is one of the several environmental or atmospheric factors available to differentiate a retail store from competing stores. Music is a particularly attractive atmospheric variable because it is relatively inexpensive to provide, is easily changed, and is thought to have predictable appeals to individuals based on their ages and life styles” (Yalch, 1993, p. 632)

The different types of music differ according to the age of the consumers. Young people or teenager could listen to rock and popular music in while older or adult people may choose classic music (Yalch, 1993). These preferences must be taken into account when the stores choose their customer target, because “preferences are expected to result in shoppers spending more time and money in stores playing liked music and less time and money in stores playing disliked music. Larger stores often differentiate areas by varying the music played in one or more departments, a practice referred to as zoning by the environmental music industry. Managers expect store music to be more effective when tailored to the listening preferences of the demographic segment shopping in a particular department compared to when the same type of music is played in all departments”. (Yalch, 1993, p. 632).

The effect of music on shoppers of different ages has been proven in different experiments, emphasizing in the importance of the correct environment music to the correct customers:

One of the experiments was executed in a national apparel chain store; the sample was focused on age and sex “using 33 male and 72 female persons shopping, exposing to the background and foreground music times” (Yalch et al, 1993, p. 633). Specific questions were asked to the respondents to find out the mood, the time and money spent, and the evaluation of the store and merchandise. The result showed that playing the correct music to the correct customer target resulted in more shoppers making purchases and more time spent in the store.

The following results were obtained with this experiment:

- “Female shoppers perceived the store to be more mature when background music was playing whereas male shoppers perceived it as being more mature when foreground music was playing, however, there were no behavioural differences in shopping times and purchases” (Yalch et al, 1993, p. 634)
- Another sample included, younger shopper from 18 to 24, adult shopper from 25 to 49 and older shopper over 50 who were underwent to foreground and background. The results showed that music differ according to the different ages, younger people prefer to shop when the music is foreground because is similar to their music but instead the older shopper prefer background music to make their shops. (p. 634)

In another experiment done in 1988 by the authors mentioned above, “clothing store shoppers were exposed either to youth-oriented foreground music or adult-oriented background music. Interviews with shoppers as they were exiting the store revealed that younger shoppers felt they had shopped longer when exposed to background music, whereas older shoppers felt they had shopped longer when exposed to foreground music. Unfortunately, actual shopping times were not observed so it could not be determined if individuals actually shopped longer, merely thought that they did, or a combination of both factors” (Yalch and Spangerberg, 2000, p.141).

#### 2.2.4 Music can distract customers from cognitive tasks

The effect of music in the background has been measured in many fields with the purpose to measure its benefits. Even though authors have explained how music benefits the environment and influences customer mood (Bruner, 1990), little information has been found on how managers apply this information to influence customer shopping.

Areni included different managerial theories in order to determine the effect of music on the customers. One of these theories indicated that “background music can distract, and potentially annoy, customers who are engaged in mental tasks”. (Areni, 2003, p. 169)

Not many studies regarding this topic could be found, however some authors specified that “*Music hold a facilitative effect on brand attitude for subjects in the low involvement condition and a distracting effect for those in the cognitive involvement condition; its effect for those in the affective involvement condition was not clear. Alternative explanations of these results are offered and implications for advertising research are discussed.*” (Young and Park, 1987, p.11)

Further studies were made by Furnaham and Bradley (1997) where they explained the theories of the music in the work and how it could increase productivity. From this study they concluded that the result from the employees depended on the type of music and the performed task.

Uhrbrock (1961) conducted a research between extroverts and introverts and he found out that performance is small when the music is on the ambience, but this situation was

worse for introverts which they were not able to store information in the presence of music and it was also harder for them to complete comprehensive tasks. Uhrbrock also argued that If the music “Is first introduced in the work situation, when the subject is not used to working in the presence of music, there is a drop in quality and quantity of work completed” It could be that when music” However if the music play in the work is played for a long period of time, introverts could adapt and their work and quality in the work would begin to improve.

#### **2.2.5 Music can convey an upscale or downscale image depending on the specific genre or format**

This theory explains that there are certain kinds of music genres or music formats that are related to a particular upscale or downscale image.

For example, Sirgy, Grewal & Mangelburg (2000), say that “Music, together with some others store atmospheric cues, form the overall context within which shoppers make patronage decisions and are likely to have a significant impact on store image. That, is, certain types of music (e.g., classical music), lighting (lights), fixtures (modern or antique-like) are likely to engender an image of an upscale store with affluent patrons”. (p. 129)

In this line, there’s a study made by Areni and Kim, 1993, who focused on the influence of the background music effect in a wine store in the United States. One of the findings of this research was that classical music made customers to spend more money and that this raise on the money expended corresponded to a more expensive selection of wine rather than an increase on the amount of the wine purchased.

In the same document, the authors mention other studies within this field like the one conducted by DiMaggio (1986), who “has developed a model describing the patronage behaviour of performing arts audiences. He recommends that firms emphasizing highly artistic/cultural (as opposed to highly extravagant/popular) performances should charge a higher admittance price to the select, well-to-do audiences having more refined tastes.” (cited in Areni 1993, p. 337)

Some other authors have also mentioned that customers tend to perceive that products’ prices are higher when classical music is played while they might perceive lower prices when country or western music is played. (Yalch and Spangenberg, 1990).

This mental association to certain kind of music explains why for example in a department store the type of music can vary in each department depending on the age segment or the type of goods offered, for instance they could play rock in the young section, softer music in the adult section, classical in the luxury goods section and country in the outerwear department. (Yalch et al., 1990).

## 2.2.6 **Music can make customers stay longer than they otherwise would**

On the subject of music and how it could help customers stay longer, authors such as Kellaris and Mantel (1994) explained some theories regarding the perception of individuals of the time spent in stores, the study found that sometimes high arousal music can be counter-productive among women, the reason of this is that music that elevates customers' mood can increase the accuracy of their time perceptions, thus they perceive that more time has elapsed.

Further studies stated "that consumers spent 38% more time in the store when exposed to slow music compared with fast music". "It is likely that shoppers spent more time in the store during the slow music periods than the fast music periods". (Yalch & Spangenberg, 2000, p.151).

Authors like Zakay, Nitzan and Glickshon (1983) mentioned that the longer time perceived by customers has to do with the awareness of the surrounding and all the activities happening in it. On the other hand, Yalch et al. (1993), explain that customers who have limited time to make purchases, perceive that time passes faster when the music is familiar than when the music is unfamiliar.

A similar finding was obtained by Smith and Curnow (1966), in this case the report stated that when the music was loud, customers shopped during a shorter period of time, meanwhile, when music was soft, the shopping time was longer.

Another interesting experiment made within this field, was the one made by Yalch et al. (1993). The purpose was to use store music for retail zoning. The innovation about this research was that it studied how music influences consumer behaviour by departments within a store. For the experiment, they played three different kinds of music in two departments that were conducted to different segments taking into account age and sex. The "analyses suggest that store music interacts with age but not gender. Middle-aged (25-49) shoppers spent more and shopped longer when foreground music was played, whereas older shoppers (over age 50) shopped longer and purchased more when background music was playing". (Yalch et al., 1993, p. 632)

A more recent study from the same authors, about the real and perceived shopping times, found that customers' perception of time was longer when familiar music was played but in reality they spend more shopping time when the music was unfamiliar. The authors explain that the shorter time spent when exposed to familiar music has to do with the increase of arousal, however, the causes of the longer perceived time might have to do with unmeasured cognitive variables. (Yalch and Spangenberg, 2000). The difference between this study and the ones mentioned above is that this one takes into account not only the real time that shoppers spent in during their shopping times, but also the perception of this time.

In this regard, as it has been explained by the different researchers and studies, music has a proven effect in the time that shoppers spend in the stores. In addition, besides its impact in the real time spent in shopping, it has also a significant effect in the perception of this. However, when talking about the effects of the music, it is important to note that they can vary significantly in relation with variables such as age, genre, kind of store, etc.

### 2.2.7 **Eliminates unacceptable silences**

When talking about unacceptable silences, it could refer to two kinds of situations according to Areni, (2003):

- The first one refers to the silence regarding to the settings or atmosphere of the place.
- The second one refers to the silence when customers are waiting on hold.

In regards to the first situation, Areni, 2003 found in his study that numerous respondents agree that silence is unacceptable in most hospitality atmospheres: “It’s an aural (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - from 30 and up - personal interview) that the place is empty, and that may lead customers to make a negative inference about the quality of the establishment” (p.173).

In this sense, some of the arguments of respondents in this study, were the fact that in places completely quiet, you could hear every single sound, For example, in the cases of restaurants, the sounds coming from the kitchen, the employees talking etc., and that this can also might indicate that “you are not busy”, which in turn might lead to a bad perception about the quality of the place.

On the other hand, the theory of unacceptable silence can also be applied to the second situation aforementioned. In this case (when customers are waiting on hold), Areni (2003) explain in his study the fact that respondents “are likely to think that they have been forgotten, or even disconnected, if there is no sound at the other end” (Areni, 2009, p. 173)

Previous studies about this theory found that when callers were exposed to stimuli to their liking, they were willing to wait on hold longer than when they were exposed to stimuli that they didn’t like. In other words this indicated that there is a positive influence of the “right” stimuli, in the on-hold waiting time (North, Hargreaves and McKendrick, 1999).

### 2.2.8 **Music makes time pass more quickly when it is enjoyable**

The music that is played in the stores affect the customers perception of the time spent into the the establishment, some authors such Dawson, Kellaris, Yalch and Sherman analysed how customer behave in the retail stores and in their findings they conclude that it’s an existing relation between “states and emotional factors such as time spent in the store, the propensity to make a purchase, and satisfaction with the experience” (Yalch & Spangerberg, 2000, p.139).

The time and music are important factor in retail purchases and it could be used for the stores benefit. It is sometimes convenient for stores try to keep customers inside the establishment as long as possible in order to encourage them to make more purchases, On

the other hand, there are situations where it is desirable to create a flow with which can increase sales volume (Milliman, 1982).

In a laboratory study developed by Kellaris (1994) he stated that the perceived time duration was longer for subjects exposed to their preferred music and shortest for the ones exposed to their unpreferred music. Other authors as Yalch and Spangerberg (2000) also referred to this in one of their experiment in which it was proven that music does not goes faster when individuals are exposed to their affective music.

In the same study of Yalch and Spangberb(2000) another conclusions was be made regarding the music and the time spent. Customers spend more times in the store when the music is less familiar than when the music is familiar, “This difference appeared attributable to differences in emotional responses to the two types of music. Individuals reported being less aroused while listening to the unfamiliar music compared with the familiar music” (Yalch & Spangeberg, 2000, p.145)

#### **2.2.9 Music can draw customers into or drive them away from an establishment depending on whether they like it**

“Besides heat and light... music is the only things that impact you 100 percent of the time while you are in the store”. (Marketing News, 1996, p. 21).

The music influence customers to be and remain in clothing stores, Sweeney and Wyber (2002) and on its results they concluded that factors as the quality of clothes, the service and pleasure are vital for approach customers but also it should be taken into account the environment factors like music due because if the environment is a pleasant the customers will remain within the place.

Researchers such as Yalch and Spangeberg (2000) mentioned important issues about this item: They analyzed the effects that music has in the behaviour of customers and how arousing music caused activities to be done faster or that time spent in activities elapse slower. “The time relates to the desire to physically stay in or to get out of the environment. This relates to the decision to shop or not to shop at the store. It also might relate to the length of time spent in the store”. (Yalch & Spangeberg, 2000, p. 140)

#### **2.2.10 Music can facilitate the interaction between customers and staff<sup>1</sup>**

Crosby (1990) suggests that the relationship between sales performance of vendors and their customers should be strong, so the customers feel comfortable and generate new purchases. Some studies have shown that background music can influence customers in relation to the retail environment (Milliman 1982). The results of selecting the right music that influence staff and customers include different types of changes in the behaviour

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis, the terms staff and salesperson will be used interchangeably to refer to the vendors working on the clothing retailers.

of individuals, generated attitudes toward a brand or an advertisement and purchase intention by consumers (Bruner, 1990).

In an experiment that studied the consumer satisfaction regarding the services of a bank, there were several tests in which the background music was manipulated to investigate the reactions between bank staff and customers (Dube, 1995). Within this study it was concluded that the background music may influence the interaction between buyers and sellers where the pleasure and arousal induced by music have independent effects on consumers or sellers who wish to interact with each other.

Within the interaction that can exist between buyers and sellers, consumers already have a defined role upon arrival to the premises where the background music can create certain types of emotional changes (Dube 1995). Now, referring to the case of the commercial setting, consumers usually wait to be addressed by site personnel in order to reduce anxiety, in this sense, Schacter's (1959) research shows that the desire to reduce anxiety on the part of buyers is one of the most important factors that generated the desire to interact with vendors.

### 2.3 Summary

Bellow, it will be presented a summary-table with the main authors and findings that investigate each of the ten theories explained before.

Theory	Authors	Main Findings
<b>Music influences costumers to buy according to the beat of the music</b>	Smith and Curnow, 1966	customers remain less in the stores when music is high.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milliman, 1982;</li> <li>• Milliman, 1986</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slow music is related to higer sales volume while fast music to lower sales volume.</li> <li>• Fast tempo music makes customers spent less time than with slow tempo.</li> </ul>
	Milliman, 1982	Slow tempo music make the costumers move slow, giving them more time to purchase more. And with fast tempo music, costumers move fast, making the costumers buy less.

<b>Music affects customers' perceptions of the atmosphere of an establishment</b>	Wall and Berry (2007)	As a message-creating medium, the atmosphere provides discriminative stimuli to buyers that enable them to recognize a restaurant's differences as a basis for choosing that restaurant
<b>Music must cater to the references of different age segments</b>	Yalch, 1993.	<p>The different types of music differ according to the age of the consumers.</p> <p>Playing the correct music to the correct customer target resulted in more shoppers making purchases and more time spent in the store.</p>
<b>Music can distract customers from cognitive tasks</b>	Bruner, 1990	The music benefits the environment and influences customer mood.
	Furnaham and Bradley, 1997	The result from the employees depended on the type of music and the performed task
<b>Music can convey an upscale or downscale image depending on the specific genre or format</b>	Sirgy, Grewal&Mangelburg, 2000	Music, together with some others store atmospheric cues, form the overall context within which shoppers make patronage decisions and are likely to have a significant impact on store image.
	Yalch and Spangenberg, 1990.	Shoppers might perceive merchandise to be higher when presented with classical music and lower priced when presented with country and western music.

<b>Music can make customers stay longer than they otherwise would</b>	Kellaris and Mantel, 1994	High arousal music can be counter productive among women because this elevates customers mood can elevate accuracy of their time perception and less shops can be made.
	Yalch&Spangenberg, 2000	Shoppers spent more time in the store during the slow music periods that the fast music periods.
	Yalch, 1993	Customers who have limited time to make purchases, perceive that time passes faster when the music is familiar than when the music is unfamiliar.
<b>Eliminates unacceptable silences</b>	Areni, 2003	<p>Silence is unacceptable in most hospitality settings. It's an aural signal that the place is empty, and that may lead customers to make a negative inference about the quality of the establishment. (Atmosphere of the place)</p> <p>Customers think that they have been forgotten, or even disconnected, if there is no sound at the other end. (Waiting on hold).</p>
	North, Hargreaves and McKendrick, 1999	When callers were exposed to stimuli to their liking, they were willing to wait on hold longer than when they were exposed to stimuli that they didn't like.
<b>Music makes time pass more quickly when it is</b>	Milliman, 1982	The time and music are important factor in retail purchases and it could be

<b>enjoyable</b>		used for the stores benefit.
	Yalch & Spangerberg, 2000	Time did not flew when the time interval was filled with a musical selection affectively positive.
	Caldwell and Hibbert, 2002	Arousing music can affect the perception of time.
<b>Music can facilitate the interaction between customers and staff</b>	Crosby, 1990	The relationship between vendors and their customers should be strong, letting the buyers feel comfortable which generate revenues.
	Brunner, 1990	The change of the behavior of the staff and the customers in a retail store is due to a good selection of music, which might empower the interaction between them.
	Milliman, 1982	Consumers usually wait to be addressed by the staff personnel in order to reduce anxiety, for this reason is important to generate the desire to interact between them.

**Chart 4.1 Summary of theories, authors and findings.**

## 3 Method

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*This chapter begins by describing the type of research that was used in order to reach the research objectives. Subsequently, it describes the methods used for collection and analysis of the necessary data needed to fulfil the purpose of this thesis.*

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### 3.1 Type of research

Based on the type of information sought, we classified our research as qualitative. Kumar, (1996) explains that *“The study is classified as qualitative if: the purpose of the study is primarily to describe a situation, phenomenon, problem or event; the information is gathered through the use of variables measured on nominal or ordinal scales (qualitative measurements scales); and if analysis is done to establish the variation in the situation, phenomenon or problem without quantifying it. The description of an observed situation, the historical enumeration of events, an account of the different opinions people have about an issues, and a description of the living conditions of a community, are examples of qualitative research.”* (p.10).

Based on this definition, we can say that the current research is descriptive. Furthermore we can say that the phenomena we are going to describe are the managerial practices and perception of music and its effects on consumer behaviour. In this sense, the qualitative tool that will be used in order to achieve our research purpose is the semi-structured direct interview. The complete procedure used to collect the data will be explained in the next part of this section.

### 3.2 Data Collection

#### 3.2.1 Primary Data

##### 3.2.1.1 Method of collecting primary Data

The primary data will be obtained using a communication method, which according to Stevens, Wrenn, Sherwood and Rudick (2006) *“includes various direct approaches of asking questions of respondents either by personal interview, telephone survey or mail questionnaire”* (p. 103)

In this regard, the qualitative instrument used in this research is semi-structured direct interview. *“This category covers questionnaires which are less formally structured than the standardized questionnaire.... They would typically be used in a personal interview where a range of information is required, some of which is easily classified into categories and some of which require more detail”.* (Moutinho, 2000)

This method differs from the one used by Areni (2002) who used unstructured interviews. The reason for this difference is that when Areni made his research there was a *“complete lack of understanding of how managers select atmospheric music”*(Areni, 2002, p. 163). However, since Areni’s studies exist, researchers in this field of study do

not have to start from zero. Using Areni's findings as a basis to build our interview model allow us to have a more structured interview taking into account the variables that Areni (2002) found.

Thus, our interviewing process is divided in two parts. The first one is more unstructured and intends to find out how clothing stores are using music, while the second part is formulated in a more structured way, in order to obtain the managers' and salesperson implicit theories; without misleading them or inducing them to answer in a very narrow way.

On the other hand, another difference between Areni's method and ours is that our interviews were made face to face while Areni's were made by telephone. In this sense, Wood (1997) states that "whenever possible, it is preferable to interview users in their natural work setting. The familiar surroundings serve as further cue to the knowledge users rely on to perform their work." (p.54). Some other author have also argued that "conducting an interview by telephone typically is seen as appropriate only for short (Harvey, 1988), structured interviews (Fontana and Frey, 1994...) (cited in Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004, p. 108). Taking into account these approaches and since our interview was neither short nor structured, we decided to make the interviews face to face in the respondents' working place (clothing stores) rather than performing them by telephone.

Despite the reasons stated above, researchers are conscious that some of the disadvantages of the selected method are that samples are usually small, due to the big amount of time it requires for the interviewer. (Moutinho, 2000)

### **3.2.1.2 Sample**

For the current study, we have selected a population (n) consisting of clothing stores located in Jönköping city. For the selection of this population, Jönköping City AB provided us with the list of all the registered companies in the city. From a list of 184 stores, that included all kind of companies from different sectors, a final list of 50 clothing stores was preselected.

To choose the sample among this group of 50 clothing stores, we decided to use purposive sampling techniques which according to Teddlie and Yu (2007) "are primarily used in qualitative (QUAL) studies and may be defined as selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions" (p.77).

According to qualitative research method literature, the purposive sampling size could be chosen after the collection of the information depending on the purpose and study's objectives: "Sample sizes... may or may not be fixed prior to data collection, depend on the resources and time available, as well as the study's objectives. Purposive sample sizes are often determined on the basis of the theoretical saturation (The point in data collection when new data no longer bring additional insights to the research questions). Purposive sampling is therefore most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection". (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, Namey, 2005, p.5)

The sample size used in this study was set after the data collection, that is to say that we first went to collect the information in the two areas where the clothing retailers were located (main shopping center and downtown) and then when we realized that the information started to be repetitive and that there was no more new information, we decided to stop the interview process. This break point resulted in 36 clothing stores which represents the 72% of the total population (n).

Once the sample size was set, the process of classifying the retailers followed. There were 2 criteria used for this classification:

- **First criteria:** Number of stores of the brand
- **Second criteria:** The size of the retailers' stores.

These two criteria indirectly indicate inventory investment, which each retailer store should have for its operation, corresponding to each company's share capital.

Since the share capital is a valuation that was very difficult to find during the interviews due to its confidentiality, we associated the number of stores with the capital invested, and we concluded that the more shops indicated more working capital invested, this therefore indicated bigger stores. Thus, once these criteria were settled, then we could decide if the clothing retailers were big, medium or small.

Having said this, we used the following intervals to classify our retailers' list:

- Brand  $\geq$  30 stores = Big
- $30 >$  Brand  $>$  10 = Medium
- Brand  $\leq$  10 stores = Small

These intervals were assigned in this way by the nature of the business in which it was found very small or very large retailer stores with great coverage. According to this classification intervals, our list of 36 clothing retailers would have 21 big, 2 medium stores and 13 small clothing retailers. Since the medium-store-population was not a representative amount, we decided to not to take into this category and therefore focus only on the small and big stores.

### 3.2.1.3 Procedure

Once the sample was ready, the collection of the empirical data was the next step. To conduct the semi-structured direct interviews, researchers went directly to each of the previously selected clothing stores in order to interview the managers in charge.

While we initially intended to interview store managers, as they are responsible for daily business decisions, they were not always available. We therefore chose to also interview sales representatives since they are the ones that are in constant communication and contact with customers.

Once the researchers reached the respondents, they introduced themselves and asked if they would be willing to collaborate with an investigation about music and its effect on consumer behaviour. When respondents accepted to collaborate, it was asked for permission to record the interview, so that it would be easy for researchers to collect the information. The next step then was to start the interview by following an interview guide previously designed (see appendix 1).

It is important to note that the interviews were divided in three groups according to the place where they were conducted as it follows:

- The first group of interviews were made in the main shopping center of the city where a big amount of clothing brands have their stores.
- The second group of interviews were conducted in the “downtown”, in the main shopping street, where a lot of clothing stores are also located.
- The third group of interviews were made in different parts of the city, where some of the small retailers have their stores.

#### **3.2.1.4 Interview guide**

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this section, we chose to use semi-structured interview which is divided in two parts:

The first part intends to examine what the clothing stores are actually doing about atmospheric music. Eleven guide questions were asked covering the more general aspects e.g. Do you play music in your establishment? How often? Why?, to more concrete aspects like “Do you have any policy or rule that you should follow in terms of the music you should play, volume, speed, etc.?.

To design this part, two steps were followed:

- First of all it was taking into account the findings obtained by Areni (2002) and DeNora and Belcher (2000) to design a first draft of the interview guide
- Secondly, this draft was tested in three interviews in order to make sure that the questions were clear enough and that they covered all the aspects required to the achievement of the purpose.

For the second part of the interview, that intends to explore what the theories and perceptions of managers and salespersons in the Swedish clothing retailers are, the ten implicit theories found in Areni’s study were also taken into account. However, there were some emergent theories that were obtained in Areni’s research that were not obviously related to previous researches. These six emergent theories were not taken into account in either the theoretical framework nor in the interview. Nevertheless, if these theories appear during the interviews, they will be mentioned in the empirical study as well as in the analysis section.

The 10 theories that were used were:

- Music influences costumers to buy according to the beat of the music

- Music affects customers' perceptions of the atmosphere of an establishment
- Music must cater to the references of different age segments
- Music can distract customers from cognitive tasks
- Music can convey an upscale or downscale image depending on the specific genre or format
- Music can make customers stay longer than they otherwise would
- Eliminates unacceptable silences
- Music makes time pass more quickly when it is enjoyable
- Music can draw customers into or drive them away from an establishment depending on whether they like it
- Music can facilitate the interaction between customers and staff

### **3.3 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is used in both quantitative and qualitative studies. The terms related to a study of trustworthiness are reliability and validity; these two terms were commonly used in quantitative studies only, but now on is also acquiring importance in qualitative studies. (Golafshani, 2003).

As it was mentioned before, in the present study the method used to collect the empirical data is the semi-structured interviews. Therefore, validation and reliability will be used in order to reduce the possibility of wrong answers.

#### **3.3.1 Reliability**

When referring to reliability frequently studies used this concept to evaluate quantitative research, but this has changed and this concept is more often used in all kinds of research included in qualitative research as it was mentioned above. If we see the idea of testing a way of information elicitation then the most important test of any qualitative study is quality (Golafshani, 2003).

According to Saunder, Lewis and Thornhill (2003) the term "reliability refers to the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings."( p.156)

However, when measured reliability there are some threats that may arise (Saunders et al,2003) and that should be taking into account:

- Subject or participant error: This is related to the respondent and his attitude when interviewing them. To eliminate this problem in our study, interviews were conducted during the "called dead times" for the clothing stores, where the customers' traffic is very low so the managers or staff didn't feel under a lot of pressure or stress because of the customers.
- Subject or participant bias: This threat is also related to the respondent. An example of this is when the respondents answer what the bosses want to hear. To prevent this bias, interviews were carefully designed and conducted in a spontaneous way, avoiding private or confidential questions who might lead to inaccurate or distorted answers. We also assured respondents total confidentiality on

their identity and store name so they would feel more confident to answer the questions.

- Observer error: This error may be caused when there is more than one interviewer with different asking method. To avoid this, the same interview guide and interviewer were used in all the interviews.
- Observer bias: This error occurs when the results can be expressed in different ways. To eliminate this error, the researchers discussed and analysed the different results obtained in the empirical study in order to make a consensus and obtain a unanimous decision about how to express and interpret them.

### 3.3.2 **Validity**

Some researchers have discussed the validity in the qualitative research and some of them argued that this type of study does not apply while others have seen the need to apply this term in their qualitative research. “When qualitative researchers speak of research validity, they are usually referring to qualitative research that is plausible, credible, trustworthy and, therefore, defensible” (Johnson, 1997, p.282).

The same author explains that validity within a qualitative study “refers to accuracy in reporting descriptive information” (Johnson, 1997, p.285). To increase the accuracy and efficiency in our study, we used the called “investigator triangulation”, this “involves the use of multiple observers to record and describe the research participant’s behaviour and the context in which they were located” (Johnson, 1997, p. 285).

When conducting the interviews, three researchers participated in the interview process. Each participant was in charge of different activities: One of them was in charge of performing the interview with the staff and managers; the second one was in charge of analyzing situations that occurred within the clothing stores but couldn’t be captured during the interviews and the third participant was recording and taking notes during the entire process. This was executed this way for greater precision and to prevent any bias when the information was been analyzed.

## 4 Empirical Study

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*This chapter presents the empirical results obtained through the interviews made to managers and staff in the clothing stores. The section is divided in two parts according to the purpose. The first part is dedicated to describing what the practices are regarding to the use or not of atmospheric music in the stores. In the second part the implicit theories that managers and salespersons have about how music affects customers shopping behaviour will be illustrated. This section is aligned with the theories exposed in the theoretical section in order to compare them with the implicit theories that managers and salespersons have.*

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### 4.1 Managerial Practices

The different variables that were measured in order to answer the first objective of the current study will be presented below, it will be exposed: examine what clothing retailers are doing in terms of atmospheric music. The empirical results are presented following the order of the interview guide that was used to collect the information. The questions that we asked to obtain the information are also presented after each item.

#### 4.1.1 Using Music

**Question:** Do you play music in your establishment? Why?

From the interviewed population we found that 89% of them play music in their establishments. However, when it was asked about the reason of this, the respondents didn't seem to have a clear explanation, but they were pretty sure that it's something necessary that you "have" to have in your store:

*"Yes. ... Because, if there is nothing, it would be boring. I think it is good with music but how it affects, I don't know."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*"I think that it is for customers to feel comfortable... I just think that we play it because it is nice."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*"I think it is good for us to have a good music. It is boring if we don't have any music".*) (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 15 and up - personal interview)

*Kind of boring without music, I think you need some sound in the atmosphere in the background. So I think we should have music all the time.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 40 to 55 - personal interview)

On the other hand, in the small stores, we found out that 31% of the interviewed stores didn't play music. When it was asked why some chose not to play any music, some of them said that it was because if they had, they would have to pay for it. So, apparently there's a concern about the rights to play music.

*“When I have in the radio in the air you know I have to pay, they come and check”* (Manager and owner - small clothing retailer - women clothes – older women - personal interview)

*“I can’t play and I have no rights to play music”* (Manager - small clothing retailer - men clothes - from 25 and up - personal interview)

Some others answered that it was the same to have music or not and that this didn’t affect the store. *“Yes, yes it is the same”* (Manager and owner - small clothing retailer - women clothes – older women - personal interview, *“It is okay without”* (Manager - small clothing retailer - men clothes - from 25 and up - personal interview). In this aspect we found that there was also a relation between the number of employees and whether or not music was played. In those stores where there was just one person in charge (sometimes the owner), it was most likely that they didn’t play any music. They argued two things; on one hand they say that they were too busy with the customers and other tasks in the stores that they didn’t have time to pay attention to the music, *“I have ten fingers in my hand”* (Manager - small clothing retailer - men clothes - from 25 and up - personal interview). *“I am by myself so I am busy all the time”*. On the other side they also said that it was annoying for them *“I prefer the silence because I can be concentrated”* (Manager and owner - small clothing retailer - women clothes – older women - personal interview)

In those stores without music and which targeted older women, they said that their targeted customers were the reason. *“Because we have a customer I like the silence this store is for older women”*. (Manager and owner - small clothing retailer - women clothes – older women - personal interview)

Among the other 69% of the small stores that said they played music, we found that 31% were stores that were located in the main shopping street, close to the big ones, and somehow it seemed that the small ones were influenced by their surroundings and they tried to fit in with the rest, and follow the tendencies of the big ones.

*“Because all the stores play music and the customer relax, especially when is a small store it can be quiet... it wouldn't be that nice experience for the customer. If all the big stores have music and then you come to a quiet store then will be something different, though”* (Manager and owner - small clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 25 to 60 - personal interview).

#### 4.1.2 Weekdays-Weekend

**Question:** Do you play the same type of music every day? Is there any difference during the weekdays and weekends?

When respondents were asked if the music changed depending on the day, we found out that especially in those stores where the target was young and modern people, there was a difference between weekdays and weekends. During the weekend they changed to more “party music”. They said that sometimes people go to their stores to buy clothes for their party or other social events they have during the weekend, and if they listen to this kind of party music, they will be in a better mood to buy more.

*“It depends on the day. On Saturdays we use to play more party music.”* (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*“From Thursday at 3 pm., we play stronger music, party music. Because from Thursday at 3 until Sundays, we have something in the store called “party”. Then, we played more DJ music, louder.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

*“On Saturdays and Sundays you can play rock and turn the volume up.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 15 and up - personal interview)

As we can read from the comments above, besides the variation in the type of music, they also manifest a difference in the volume used during the weekend; they said they turned it louder compared to the weekdays where the music was mostly low and sometimes calm. In this sense, they also mention something about the mood depending of the days:

*“From Monday to Thursday we play softer music, because people can’t stand the pum, pum, pum, all the time nor even the people who works here.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

*“Yeah. In the weekends we change to up tempo. It is more like a little bit party. Now from Monday to Friday, it’s mid tempo. It’s kind of soft music. It depends how you want to have it.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*“On Saturday we can put so more disco songs just to get people in the right mood we can’t play this same songs on a Monday we think about that a lot”.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 30 to 60 - personal interview)

#### 4.1.3 Type of music

**Question:** Which type of music do you play? Genre – Format

When respondents were asked about the type of music played in their stores, we identified some repetitive patrons, related mostly to the target group they were trying to reach and the image they wanted to project.

We can divide our empirical analysis in the following categories:

- Fashionable stores: In this kind of stores the music played was modern and also the range of genres could vary in the same play list from one genre to another. The most important was the fact that it was modern; it could be jazz, pop, techno, etc. On the other hand, we also noticed that among these stores, it was common to take into account the top 10, 40 or 100 of the season in their play lists.

*“Every day we play all kind of music. We only take the new playlist the top 100.”* (Staff, big store, woman and man) (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*“Yes, we play the top ten of the moment”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 15 and up - personal interview).

*“So we always turn the music, like the top hundred and something, some people recognize it.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)

*“We have a program that use mix music so all the music are new”.* (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men and children shoes - all ages - personal interview).

*“We have popular music, and every week they upload at least 5 or 10 new songs. The music we play is the one that appears in the top list.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview).

*“Pop, rock, R&B... we try to choose some music that can fit with all the customers as well. Music that they recognize”.* (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

Another interesting finding was that there seemed to be a pre-conception about the heavy rock and techno music. Fashionable stores don't consider this a good type of music to play, however in certain kind of stores, like alternative ones, this type of music is a very important element for them (later in this part this will be explained more in detail).

*“It is like we can play techno music but it doesn't do well with customers.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 15 and up - personal interview)

*“Maybe I cannot play a hard rock or something noo...”* (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - grown up - personal interview)

*“We will never play hard rock or anything like that.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)

- Older-target stores:

In those stores where the target was older people, the type of music was softer and calmer.

*“Ehh, different kind of music but our customers is about 40 and 50 and older so our kind of music is Frank Sinatra, John Stewart”* (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - grown up - personal interview)

We also found that in most of these stores the staff is also among this range of age. Thus, the music they played is also the one they liked.

*“It's much easier to be here with the music of course if it is music I like and I choose the music.”* (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - grown up - personal interview)

*“But we also play some of our music to change a little but we get it from the top music for young people”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview).

- Alternative stores: In these kinds of stores where the clothes are more alternative, the type of music is also different from the top hits or the popular music. For example in stores where the style was more “punk” or “rock”, the music was a key element in order to project their image. They manifest how important was for them to differentiate from the rest of the “normal” stores.

*“The clothes we have here are sort related to the music, the genre it’s like we are having this hard rock image so that kind affects the clothes. Inside here, all is based on rock music. I think is quite important for our shop.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

*“I think that is very very important for us. People come here because is a store with attitude, we play rock music, we have this clothes related to the rock music.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

Another example of these “alternative” stores are those that sell special clothes for winter, sports, etc. In this case, we found that the type of music was also lined with the concept of the store:

*“But also we can play nature songs and so on... Birds singing... just because we want to show that our clothes are mostly made for people who like to explore the nature.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 40 to 55 - personal interview)

On the other hand, another interesting finding from our empirical study was that most of the stores were playing Christmas music. This is due to the fact that the interviews were made in December so the stores also wanted to have that Christmas feeling in their ambience. However, when it was asked if the music they played had to do with the seasonality, they said that this was only for the Christmas seasons, the rest of the year was the usual music they play.

*“But also depends of the season. Right now a lot of Christmas songs”.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*“It changed because of the season. Like now Christmas.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and children shoes - all ages - personal interview)

*“Because of the season we just play Christmas music. By the rest, we try to play lounge, jazz... soft music”.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 17 to 70 - personal interview)

Last but not less, we could talk about another store category in which the age segment was wide, in this case, managers and salespersons in small and big stores were pretty concerned about choosing the right music that could fit to most to their customers.

*"... We try to choose some music that can fit with all the customers as well".* (Manager-big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*"We're trying to have music that all people are enjoying."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)

#### 4.1.4 Volume

**1.1 Question:** How do you manage the music volume? Is it low or loud? Is it in the background or in foreground?

The volume of the music in the stores is also determined by the target, the type of store, the location and the size of the store. For example in the big clothing retailers focused in fashion clothes managed a medium volume, basically in the background. However, the volume could change depending of the day. As it was stated before, not only the type of music can change but also the volume.

When it comes to music volume, respondents showed a high level of awareness about how music volume can affect their customers. In this point, except for some "alternative" stores with rock or punk styles, we could identify a common theory about the volume: "No matter if the music is nice or not, too high volume is not well perceived for the costumers and it can disturb them."

*"Yes because if it's too loud, it's not good. You must have a song like this. More slow, relax and so on. Because the customers can get stress"* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 17 to 70 - personal interview)

*"Maybe some people don't like the music especially if the volume is too high"* (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*"Otherwise we just put the music but not so loud in order to be able to talk to each other like this."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)

*"And also if I play very loud music, after two hours I would be like, you know, getting crazy."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)

Some of them have been so concerned about this aspect that they have even measured with special devices the volume that should be used in their establishments.

*"We have a limit. Some people came here with a special device that measures the volume and they have indicated us what should be the correct volume for our store".* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

Another repetitive element that was mentioned several times during the interviews was the fact that those stores located in the shopping mall, had to follow some general regulations referring to the volume of the music.

*“We have a limit for the volume here in the mall. But from Thursdays at 3pm till Sundays we can put it a little loud...”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

*“It’s up to me, but we can’t have all the volume we want, that is up to us and also to the leader in A6. He could be angry also complain a lot about us, so we have to keep quite low.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

On the other hand, respondents also seemed to be pretty conscious that they had to keep a certain volume that didn’t disturb their neighbours in the mall.

*“Yes, actually we want it louder but the other shops can complain, we have a lot of complain about the music, and the reason is that there is an underwear shop and there are older women buying there and they don’t like it so there have been a lot of complains”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

#### 4.1.5 Speed

**Question:** Do you play fast or slow music? Up-tempo – Low-tempo?

The speed of the music in the stores also differs according to certain variables that will be explained below.

- **Age Segment:** In the stores for young people, the music tended to be fast tempo while in those dedicated to an older segment it’s mostly low tempo. However stores where they managed a wide age segment, they said that decisions about the speed, volume and type of music were hard because as they manage so many different ages it was not easy to play something that fit everyone. Below we can see how opinions can vary depending on the kind of store:

*“We will definitely play more music for young people and so we try to play up tempo so people get excited and want to shop here.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)

*“If it’s fast I think that costumers will be stress so it’s good if it’s mix.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and children clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*“It’s both but it is good low tempo.”* (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - from 30 and up - personal interview)

- **Style:** As we said, the style also influences the speed of the music. In the alternative stores with a “rock” style, the music was always up-tempo, while in those that were dedicated to sports or winter clothes, the music was low-tempo.

- **Weekends and Weekdays:** As it was explained before, not the only the type of music changes according to the days, the speed can also change between weekdays and weekends.

*“Yeah, in the weekends we change to up tempo. It’s more like a little bit party. Now from Monday to Friday, is mid tempo.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - all ages - personal interview)

#### 4.1.6 Update

**Question:** How frequent do you change/update the play list?

In the big stores were they received the CD with the play list from the head office, the average time for updating the music was every month. For those who had their own channel, the music was updated more frequently, especially the ones using Spotify, as this is online music software, it’s easier to update the music online.

During the interviews, staff and managers also commented about the importance of keeping their playlists updated in order to no to bore customers or themselves.

*That's why we try to mix the music, we don't like to repeat the songs like cafe del mar or house music and during the weekends more party music.* (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*“...we have a program that use mix music so all the music are new.”* (Manager - big clothing retailer - women, men and children shoes - all ages - personal interview)

In this point, some of the staff that worked in those stores who received the music monthly from the head office, also commented that sometimes when they got tired of the playlist, they played their own music.

*Yeah, we try to mix that with our own CD's as well because we get so used, so we want to quit it.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)

#### 4.1.7 The music decision

**Question 1:** Who decides which kind of music should be played?

**Question 2:** Do you have any policy or rule that you should follow in terms of the music you should play, volume, speed, etc

When it comes to the decision about the music that should be played in the stores, we found five possibilities:

- The head office
- The owner
- The manager of the store

- Outsourcing with another company
- The staff

	Big Stores	Small Stores
The head Office	59%	0%
The Staff	30%	89%
The manager of the store	4	0%
Outsourcing with another company	9%	0%
Owner	0%	11%

**Chart 4.1 The music decision in big and small stores**

We found that 59% of the big clothing retailers had the decision centralized from the head office or the central management.

*“It comes from Stockholm, it is central. We got a Cd from the head office.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and children clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*“Our head office. We get it by the post every month”.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and children shoes - all ages - personal interview)

*“Yes, we have 4 channels to choose from, maybe rock and roll or rock, for summer we have the summer channel, winters, we have the winter channel now.... Actually we don't decide the music anymore”.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - men clothes - from 15 to 40 - personal interview)

For the rest of the population, in 34% of them it was the manager of the store or the staff who made the decision about the music that should be played in their establishments.

*“The personal, the staff workers, they made their play list. We try to mix it with what is new. The new hits, then we try to mix it with our own taste.”* (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*“Each store is the one who decide”.* (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*“Is just the people that is here who decide”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 17 to 70 - personal interview)

In the remaining 9% of the stores, they outsourced this decision with an external company, that according to the respondents, take into account the characteristics of the store to create the playlist that fits the most for their stores.

*“I think the company we buy, we have given them some direction of we want and they put it together.”* (Manager - big clothing retailer - women, men and children shoes - all ages - personal interview)

*“It is my own reflection I think the company who deliver to us the Cds knows what it suits.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 35 and up - personal interview)

Meanwhile, in the small retailers the 89% played music according to the managers and staffs likes and when it was asked if the decision was based on special criteria, the big majority answered that they didn't think that much about that. They just played the music they thought was “nice for the customers”.

*“It's all kind of music... We decide.”* (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - from 30 and up - personal interview)

*“We played music for ourselves and because we don't want that the ambience is so silence.”* (Staff - small clothing retailer - women clothes - older women - personal interview)

However, it was surprising to find 20% who seemed to really care about the type of music and that seemed to be conscious of its effects in their customers. In this sense, as it was mentioned before, it was found that the location had a big influence in the awareness of the impact of the music. The closer they were to the other big stores, the more aware they were of the music and its effect in shopping behaviour.

#### 4.1.8 Source of the music

**Question:** What is your music source? Radio- Mp3 players- CD's- Online software- Others

When it was asked from which source they got the music they played, we received different answers that were mostly related to the size of the store:

- Radio
- CD's (form the store/staff/head office)
- Mp3/Ipods
- Spotify<sup>2</sup>
- Their own radio channel

In the following chart, we will show a matrix that relates the different answers to the variable of the size (small and big)

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<sup>2</sup> Spotify is a music streaming service offering unlimited streaming of selected music from a range of major and independent record labels including Sony, EMI, Warner Music Group and Universal with virtually no buffering delay. (Wikipedia) Via Internet: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spotify>

	Big Stores	Small and Medium Stores
Radio	0%	33%
CD's Staff	9%	22%
CD's from the Head Office	32%	0%
Mp3/Ipod	18%	11%
Spotify	14%	0%
Their own radio channel	27%	0%
CD's and Mp3/Ipod	0%	33%

**Chart 5.2 Sources of the music in small and big stores.**

As we can observe from the chart, in the big stores the majority (73%) of them used either their own radio channel, Spotify or CD's from the Head Office. It's important to clarify that in the ones using CD's and their own radio channel, the decision was for all the stores in the country. It means that this is standardized for all the stores, and the only thing the individual stores could control was the volume.

*"We have a radio that is just for these stores. In all our stores in Sweden, we play the same music. Bibok has its own web channel radio."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

On the other hand, those who use Spotify explained how technology has eased their work in terms of the music played. They also stated that it was an advantage to use this kind of software because it was easier for them to keep update with the new hits.

*"We always put Spotify and with the better Internet connections and everything now is more possible to do this. Before, like two years ago, we had our CD's players and basically you had the same CD's over and over again during the whole weekend. Now, it's much easier but it also means that we have to make the right playlist so everyone likes it."* (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

As we can observe in the chart, none of the big stores use radio in their stores. However, in the small ones a considerable amount (33%) of them use this source, in this case the respondents said that it was easy for them to use radio, because they didn't have to spend so much effort and time changing CD's or updating playlists. However, respondents in the big stores said that it was not convenient to use radio, because of the commercial and because sometimes in the radio they talked about bad news that could affect or disturb their customers.

*"Even, sometimes we don't play any kind of music. Is not radio, is mp3, because in the radio sometimes they put some news and if there are bad news, the customers don't like to shop. Not radio."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes -

from 17 to 70 - personal interview)

In the case of the small stores that didn't play radio, they basically used either CD's or IPods to play their music. For those who had more than one store, they said that there was not any standard about this, if they had two stores for example, the staff working in each of the stores decided what to play..

#### 4.1.9 Cost

**Question:** Do you have to pay for the music you use?

For this topic, the information obtained from the respondents was not enough to make generalizations, conclusions or even to identify a pattern. However, we can state that in the percentage of the small stores that didn't play any music, they were concerned by the issue that they had to pay for it.

On the other hand, it's known that in those big stores that hired an external company to decide about the music that should be played according to the store, the target and other variables, they had to pay to these companies for their service. No Information was given about this.

In the case of the ones using Spotify, as this is free software, we assumed that the cost for it shouldn't be so high, even though it's possible that these stores might buy premium services with this company in order to avoid commercials and to have other kind of privileges.

In the case of the radio, one of the stores said that they didn't play music from the radio because they had to pay to an organization named STIM<sup>3</sup>.

*"We have to play CD's not radio... we have something call STIM... If you play radio and something, you have to pay money to an organization that the name is STIM."*  
(Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and children shoes - all ages - personal interview)

## 4.2 Theories

In this section, the ten theories that were presented in the theoretical framework are confronted with the empirical results obtained from the interviews with managers and salespersons of the Swedish clothing retailers.

### 4.2.1 Music influences costumers to buy according to the beat of the music

**Questions:** According to your experience, do you consider that your costumers' behaviour is influenced by the music speed? - Do you consider that certain type of music speeds up the shoppers/shopping time?

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<sup>3</sup> In the theoretical framework, it is briefly explained what is this organization about.

According to Areni (2003) the beat of the music is related the speed (fast and low). Certain variables were found for these points, that according to the respondents influence customers to buy depending on the beat of the music.

- According to the age segment: Music for younger people used to be more up tempo and for older people it used to be lower tempo.

*"We will never play hard rock or anything like that, we will definitely play more music for young people and we try up tempo so people get excited and want to shop here".* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)

- According to the store style: The style of a store influence if the chosen music is up tempo or low tempo.

*"People come here because is a shop with attitude, we play rock music"* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

- During the weekends and weekdays the beat of music also change:

*"Thursdays at 3pm the music start to be stronger, disco music. Because all Thursdays at 3 until Sundays we have something in the store that is called party, so we put Dj music, this is up tempo but this only happen from Wednesday till Sunday.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

*"Yeah, on weekends we change to up tempo. Is more like a little bit party. Now from Monday to Friday, is mid tempo. It's kind of soft music. It depends how you want to have it".* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - all ages - personal interview)

#### 4.2.2 Music affects customers' perceptions of the atmosphere of an establishment

**Questions:** Do you consider that the atmosphere of your store attracts new customers? - Do you consider that the image of you stores could be affected by the music decision in your store?

When it comes to the atmosphere and the music influence in the retailer stores, it was found that big shops recognize that the music plays an important role on stores and on its effects in the ambience. Most of the respondents answered that they think that music created the right atmosphere, but when they was asked why, they didn't seem to have a lot of arguments to support it.

90% of the big retailer's stores stated that music is a key element in order to set up a good ambience in their stores because, according to them, this helped clients to relax and feel comfortable. The other 10%, although they use music, they didn't know clearly how music helps to have a good environment.

*"I think it makes customers feel more comfortable when there is something than if it is quiet". (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and children shoes - all ages - personal interview)*

*"Sometimes people are shy before entering to the store, but I think that the music allows them to feel more relax and feel more comfortable. We always try to make all the customers feel relax; we don't want our customers to feel upset. We try to find the right space". (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)*

*"It is easy to walk in a store where they have music on it and they feel more welcome and freer to do whatever they come to do". (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 15 and up - personal interview)*

In the case of the small retailers 30% argued that music had no influence in costumers and in the atmosphere but the remaining 70% assured us that music could help the atmosphere and customer in several ways:

*"I don't want that the ambience to be so silence". (Staff - small clothing retailer - women clothes - older women - personal interview)*

*"Music in the atmosphere is good when the person is alone and they don't want to be the centre of attention". (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - from 30 and up - personal interview)*

#### 4.2.3 **Music must cater to the references of different age segments**

**Question:** What are your criteria for selecting the appropriate music for your customers? - Do you take into account the age segment of your target in order to take decisions about the music played in your establishment?

We found that respondents have also their own implicit theories about how music must be selected in order to fulfil the customers' preferences. They think, for example, that young people preferred up tempo when they are shopping but older people preferred low tempo when they are doing their shops.

On the topic of what big and small retailer stores are applying to reach customer preferences, it was found that large stores but with homogenous age segment seek to please their target with nice and enjoyable music and in the majority of the cases with disco and up tempo music. On the other hand large stores without homogenous age segment seek to please their target with mix music that fits everyone.

*"The music is more for younger people between 20 and 25 maybe not 50." (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)*

*"We turn to younger people that is mostly between 14 -30 years but of course younger and older people come anyways but that are the ones we are target in" (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)*

Stores with homogeneous age segment, for example stated the following:

*"If it is up tempo is more fun to shop when it is a song that you recognize, it is more cool".* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men clothes – young people - personal interview)

The non-homogeneous-age-segment stores pointed out that:

*"It is mix and every customer like the music. We play some music for you and some for me because it's a mix."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and children clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*"We have children and also 60 or 70 years old customers, so it is mix music".* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*"We try to stay in a place that everyone could find something they like".* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 17 to 70 - personal interview)

In smaller stores different opinions about this issue were found. One small retailer store argued that it was a follower of the other retailer stores so in this store for example, the purpose wasn't aligned with the age segment. Another argued that music was important to make staff comfortable and some others argued that it was complicated to satisfy all the different tastes and the remaining ones didn't consider that the music must cater the age segment.

*"I try to match the music with my target, but it is a bit complicated to guess what they really like. We just try not to play complicated music, music must be easy to hear".* (Manager - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 25 and up - personal interview)

#### 4.2.4 Music can distract costumers from cognitive tasks

**Question:** According to your experience: Do you consider that music could be a source of distraction for your customers?

Although the information related with this theory was limited, we got homogeneous information from different big retailer respondents in relation on how music could distract customers from cognitive tasks. They agreed on that music could distract customers if:

- The music was not the proper for the customers:

*"Parents who come here with their younger children. They just can't listen to it, it's so exhausting, they want it to change. Sometimes when they are here with their little children or babies they come and say: "please can you turn the music down my baby started to cry and stuff",* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

*"Yes, absolutely because you don't like the music when it goes to distract you and you think is annoying so you just want to go".* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 30 to 60 - personal interview)

- The music play in the shop has a very high volume:

*“Maybe some people don't like the music especially if the volume is too high. It is a hard work to know which one is the right music”.* (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

- The customer recognizes the songs:

*“If the music is sort of your like you concentrate on the music and that always make time go slowly”.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

- The store was for older people:

*“I like the silence in this store, it is for older women, so I am busy all the time... They want to have coffee and they don't want to have the music in there”*  
(Manager and owner - small clothing retailer - women clothes - older women - personal interview)

#### 4.2.5 **Music makes time pass more quickly when it is enjoyable**

**Questions:** According to what you have seen, have you perceived that music makes time pass more quickly when it is enjoyable for you and also for your customers? - Conversely, do you think that bad music makes you and your customers feel that time is dragging on?

When it comes to the theory that time passes more quickly when it is enjoyable, we found that in reality this applies to costumers but also to the staff. The music can influences negatively or positively the staff mood, the time that has passed and the way they interact with customers.

According to respondents, when music is enjoyable is easier for the staff to offer a good service and at the same time it might influence the perception of their working time.

*“I think that music pass more quickly when I enjoy the music, for me is very fast because if I am in a quite store is boring”.* (Manager - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 50 - personal interview)

*“I think, that also people like me, that are always working here get into the right mood if we like the music played into the place, and I will be singing and singing and I could transmit that to the client”.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

Another important aspect that was mentioned during the interviews was the “perception” of time. Managers and staff of small and big stores seemed to agree in the fact that when the music was nice and costumers liked it, it could make them feels time goes quickly

*"Customers can say is good music and they enjoy and they stay longer". (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - from 30 and up - personal interview)*

*"Yeah, we want a happy environment; we don't want people to get stress. So not like very stressful music, just happy music and people can enjoy". (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)*

#### 4.2.6 **Classical music can convey an upscale or downscale image depending on the specific genre or format**

**Question:** What is your personal opinion: Do you think that certain kind of music could be related with pricey stores? What about classical music? What image do you consider your customers perceive when classical music is being played? Do you think they could relate this kind of music with high quality?

When respondents were asked if the type music could somehow convey an upscale or downscale image, around 80% said that they didn't think music could affect their store in this way. Those few who said that it might have an effect, stated that they were not interested in projecting an upscale image:

*"We have exclusive brands, but everyone has to be welcome. And if you have extremely exclusive stores and extremely exclusive customers, then you should definitely play classical music. Just if you want extra rich customers"* (Staff - small clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 15 to older people - personal interview)

*"I have heard of it but I don't know, I don't think so. I mean that so typical, why should just be classical music that makes you prided, I mean that sounds I don't know, I don't believe that because music is... I don't believe that, but who am I, I am not scientist I don't know."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

Respondents also mentioned another interesting relation between music for young people and the perception of prices. For example some of them said that if you play music for young people, which means modern and up-tempo, the perception of the customers might be that prices in the store are not so high, while in those stores where the music is calm and somehow targeted to a more adult, the perception are that the prices there are higher.

*Yeah, maybe if you compare this store to GANT, maybe they play more calm music, and we play more so tempo, I think higher tempo is a bit younger people and it looks not too expensive. And if we play calm music they would think that the store is more expensive that what we are. But if you go there and list what they play, I don't know what they are paying today but I think you should hear the difference.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - men clothes - from 15 to 40 - personal interview)

On the other hand, even though, most of the respondents didn't agree that certain type of music, like classical music, could convey an upscale or downscale image. They did agree that music had an impact on the image they wanted to project to their customers.

*“We sell modern clothes here and we want to project that image, so the music we play here has to be also modern”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

#### 4.2.7 **Music can make customers stay longer than they otherwise would**

**Question:** Do you think that music could lead to more time spent by customers in the store if the music is the right kind?

One of the most mentioned aspects of how music could affect costumers, was the fact that it can make them stay longer or leave, depending of the kind of music and the volume. In most of the interviews, respondents mentioned something about this point.

*“If the music is comfortable you stay longer in the boutique, yes I think so because if the music is very loud and it’s not my type of music I don’t like it and I go out. So I think it depends on the type of music”.* (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - grown up - personal interview)

*“Maybe customers will stay a little bit longer if there is good music and they feel that they can buy more”.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and children shoes - all ages - personal interview)

*“Maybe the music creates a relation with the brand. Maybe depending of the mood of the person they can stay longer and buy more”.* (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

In those stores where the age segment was wide, they said that the decision of the music was not easy but that they tried to find a balance in order to try to please to the big majority.

*“It’s always different. Like we have mummies from 10 to 12. Then from 12 to 3 we have the old ladies, and then we have the young ladies, so you have to manage in order to keep the customers in the store.”* (Staff - small clothing retailer - women clothes - all ages - personal interview)

The respondents were aware of the double effect that music can produce in their costumers, they admitted to being conscious of the fact that the decision they took about the kind of music played in their stores could please some of their costumers and therefore make them stay longer but also it could disturb some others and make them leave.

*“I think if you like the music....you can just listen to it and you don’t think about it but If you hear music that you ”think oh damn it’s so bad” I mean you cannot hear it all the time and It’s like you concentrate on the music and that always make time go slowly I mean if you are looking on a watch and you see how slowly you think ”oh man it takes long time” is the same about the music if you are listen to it really listen to it I think sort of make it just listen to it, so if you have good music of course if like going to a concert you really like it you don’t want it to end but it always end but I think that.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

Several respondents said, for example, that especially old people could be very sensitive to the kind of the music played in a store. In those stores, where the segment was basically young people and where they music was a bit louder or fast, old costumers wouldn't stay for a long time.

*“Parents who come here with their younger children. They just can't listen to it, it's so exhausting, they want it to change. Sometimes when they are here with their little children or babies they come and say: “please can you turn the music down my baby started to cry and stuff”, I mean this is music... There are a lot of opinions about it, so sometimes you have to kind of change it a little bit for the costumers”.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

One of the stores that sells clothes only for women said, for example, that music not only affects their direct costumers, who actually buy the products, but also the people accompanying them.

*“In fact we have costumers that really like our music and their husbands like it too, so they like to sit here and listen to the music, while waiting for their wives.* (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - grown up - personal interview)

#### 4.2.8 **Eliminates unacceptable silences**

**Questions:** According to your personal point of view; What do you think costumers feel when they enter into a store that is completely quiet? Do you think this can affect the quality perception of the store?

Most of the interviewed admit being aware of the fact that in a clothing store without music there is something missing. Among the arguments they exposed to explain this phenomenon we can mention the following:

*If there is no music, I think you are missing something. Because a store in a shopping mall has so much surrounding and if it's completely silence, then you hear everything outside.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 17 to 70 - personal interview)

*“It's very very uncomfortable without. You have to have music in the background, we have to have something on, otherwise it gets very uncomfortable.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 30 to 60 - personal interview)

*Its gets boring if we don't have music and it's so quiet and you hear everyone talking.*  
*Gina Tricot*

During the interview, it was asked to imagine their stores in completely silence and try to imagine from the costumers' perspective how they would feel and some of them answered with the following expressions:

*“They can feel they have to leave because we are closing or something. I think that customers want music.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and children clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*“Without music they would think that we are closing.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

*“Yesterday for example, the music was off, and people started to react and they tried to leave because they thought we were closing. They started wondering... what happened?”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

Another important aspect that is directly related to the characteristics of the clothing retailers was the fact that when costumers enter to a store:

- They don't want to feel observed or under a lot of pressure to buy something, so music somehow helps to reduce the tension and make them feel more relax.

*“If it is quiet and for example is an empty shop and there is one person here is always that we will get in tension, you know, they will feel like “I'm watching you”. But if there is some music is more relax. It's the same if they feel that there are more people in here.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)

- When the person likes any article and they want to try it, they wouldn't feel comfortable if the store is completely in silence and they feel that everybody is listening to all the sounds they could emit in the dressing room.

*“They feel more comfortable I think, if they are in the dressing room and it is quiet, we can hear everything so I think they will feel more comfortable with music”.* (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - grown up - personal interview)

- The perception of emptiness. If there's no music and not many customers, people will feel notice that the shop is empty and can make them feel uncomfortable:

*“Sometimes when is very empty and only one customer and then is good some music”* (Staff - small clothing retailer - women clothes - older women - personal interview)

*“When it's quite It feels empty and not so happy”.* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 15 and up - personal interview)

#### 4.2.9 **Music can draw customers into or drive them away from an establishment depending on whether they like it**

**Questions:** Based on past experiences, do you consider that depending on the music, customers could be attracted to enter into the store? What do you think of the music played here? Do customers like it? Have you perceived that some music could make customers to feel disturb so they prefer to leave?

In this point, around 90% of the respondents said that they didn't think music could draw costumers to their establishment because they said that the volume was not loud enough so that customers could listen to it from the outside. However, 100% of the population that played music agreed that once the customers are in, music can drive them away if they don't like it.

*"If it's very loud I think it draws costumers, but they can also go away because of the music. I can perceive that difference on Thursday when I played the party music. The young people like it but people from my age, they come and say mmm and they leave".* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

*"I think affect a lot. But I also think if I just take it to (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview) and the music we are playing, here, a lot of people who don't like it maybe get out or they say "I don't want to go there"... I think it affects but it is also very personal how to react with the music. If you like it, I think you will say "yeah I would like to stay in here and I really like the clothes", but if you don't like it you say "oh no I am going out from here", so I think it's personal but of course it affects but it depends if you like it or not."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

Among the small percentage that said that music could draw customers to their stores, we can find again those alternative stores that played music louder than the rest. In this case they said that if the customers that were passing by liked the music, they might feel attracted to enter to the store and they could end up buying something.

*"Maybe they hear it and it's quite loud, so maybe they say "wow, what is this?" that is something that I like to listen to, maybe there are clothes that I like to wear so that might work..."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

*"For example, If I pass by a store and I listen to a song I like, sometimes I enter just to listen to that song and then you start checking the store and you can end up buying something."* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 25 - personal interview)

Two of the stores expressed that they have been trying to implement a new strategy in order to draw customer trough the music. This strategy consists in bringing a DJ to play inside the store.

*"But in our other store that is located in the city canter, we have tried sometimes a DJ and then we could see that it made people come to the store. (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)*

*"3 weeks ago we have a kind of club night, we have a DJ standing up with high musicand people were coming. If you play high music, people come but it must be good*

*music.*” (Staff - big clothing retailer - men clothes - from 15 to 40 - personal interview)

#### 4.2.10 **Music can facilitate interaction between customers and staff**

**Questions:** Do you think that music facilitates the interaction with your customers? – What do you think of the interaction between salespersons and customers in the presence of music? - Would it be different if no music was played? How? – Do you think that customers would feel more confident to interact with the staff in the store if the music is on and is enjoyable?

When we asked about the interaction between customers and staff we found some divided opinions. A few of them said they didn't think music could affect them. However, the big majority noted that they were affected by the music, because music affected their mood, therefore, their attitude towards the customers.

*“If you like the music is easier, for sure you will feel much better”.* (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)

*“Give confidence because if I like the music I go to talk to the customers.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 15 and up - personal interview)

*“We work faster when we have music so we speed up so we do everything more effectively so I think the music is very important for the staff just like for the customer.”* (Manager - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to 50 - personal interview)

They also pointed out the fact that when they and their customer liked the music, it was always a good start to break the ice and start a conversation with them.

*“If I take it to me, if I have a good song and this one makes me happy, it makes it easy for me... You can be in the flow... If you have a good day listening to a good music, maybe it could be easier to talk to a customer. If you like it and if you have the music in common you can talk about it and it's like an ice breaker. If the customer says “oh this song is very good” and then you can say “yeah I like it a lot” and then you can start talking and you can have a good relationship with your customer.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - women and men clothes - from 14 to 30 - personal interview)

*“I think the music gets on everybody's mood, yeah sometimes my colleagues are around singing and the customer are like “yeah... cool”.... it's a good feeling..... welcome to our family.”* (Staff - big clothing retailer - men clothes - from 15 to 40 - personal interview)

Some others said that sometimes music affects them negatively, when the music was so repetitive they got tired of it, and it was annoying at some point.

*“When we are tired is time to change. It's up to us.”* (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - from 30 and up - personal interview)

## 5 Analysis

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*This chapter presents the analysis of the data obtained through the empirical results. It is structured in a different way than the empirical section in order to highlight the main points that were found in the previous section. At the end of the chapter a summary and a general evaluation of the current study are presented.*

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### 5.1 Practices regarding the use of music

#### 5.1.1 Using Music

The theory says that the use of music “is one of the most frequently used atmospheric factors to enhance the delivery of services to customers” (Yalch and Spangenberg, 1990, p.32). Whether based on theory or not, we found that in the large clothing stores the whole population (100%) plays music in their establishments

As it was mentioned in the empirical result, 90% of the managers and staff interviewed reported that music is something needed in the clothing stores; however the criteria for choosing variables such as the type of music, the volume, and the speed vary according to certain particular characteristics of each retailer.

Thus, we are going to divide the analysis according to these variables:

##### 5.1.1.1 Size (small vs. big clothing retailers)

After examining the arguments and answers from the interviews with small and big stores, it could be said that in the big retailers the atmospheric music is used in a more systematic way than in the small ones.

In the present study, when talking about a systematic organization of the music<sup>4</sup>, it means that there are a minimum number of rules, policy or criteria regarding the music decision in their stores.

We found that the level of systematization depends on whether music decision is taken in a central or decentralized way. The greater the level of centralization the more systematized the music decision is and this is directly related to the size of the clothing retailers. This means, that in the big stores, the decision of the music is centralized thus the music decision is systematic, meanwhile, in the small stores where the music decision is decentralized, the music is played in an intuitive way.

In those clothing retailers where the music decision was centralized, we found that:

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<sup>4</sup> Systematic organization: the act of organizing something according to a system or a rationale

- The decision about volume, speed and genre of the music was taken in the head offices and then it was communicated to the different stores.
- The music is given in CDs or through their own music channels, where they put the playlist that should be played.
- The music was updated with a determined periodicity, and in most of the cases it was updated every month.
- The music played is designed to project the image of the store.
- The only variable that staff is able to control is the volume.
- The music was never played from the radio.

In the stores with decentralized music decision, it was found that:

- Staffs members working in the stores are the ones who decided the music played.
- The source of the music came from staff members' Music Players, or radio, according to the staffs' preference.
- The updates of the music didn't have any periodicity, contrary it was up to the staff and their consideration.
- The music is not necessarily aligned with the image or concept of the store.

#### **5.1.1.2 Location**

Among the small stores visited, we found that there was a relationship between the location of the stores and the use of music. Some of the managers and staff of small retailers located in areas where they were surrounded by the big stores showed a high level of knowledge about music and its effects. In some cases they didn't know why they were playing music, but still they seemed compelled to because other stores were. Furthermore, by playing music, the smaller stores were assimilating to their larger counterparts.

On the other hand, 100% of the small stores who didn't play any music were located neither in the main shopping street nor in any shopping center. And the stores that were around them were also small and with the same characteristics.

So, apparently there is a positive relationship between the use of music and the proximity to the large stores. The closer the small clothing shops are to the big ones, the more aware they were of the music and its effect in shopping behavior.

#### **5.1.1.3 Number of employees**

In the methodology section of the current study it was explained that the criteria used to classify the clothing retailers was the number of stores. However, over the course of our store visits, we realized that among the called "small" clothing retailers, there were differences in size regarding the number of employees working in the store. In the shops where there was only one employee working per shift; they argued that they were too busy with the customers and that they didn't have time to think about the music. In the

stores with two or more employees, they expressed they made decisions about music in consensus, taking turns with the task.

Having said that, among the small retailers there's a positive relation between the number of employees and the use of the music. Roughly 75% of the non-music stores had only one person in charge of the establishment and in the other 25% there were only two employees.

#### **5.1.1.4 Weekdays and weekends**

Especially in clothing shops for young people, managers and staff who were able to manipulate the music in their establishments stated that they changed the volume and type of music according to the day of the week. There's a preconception, for example, that on Mondays people are sleepy and they don't want to listen to fast or loud music, however, during the weekends, they said that people are in a different mood, "party mood" as it was expressed by some of the respondents.

As for the staff in these kinds of fashionable stores, the majority of the members are also young people that can identify themselves with the music and with this change of mood according to the day. Therefore, their personal experiences and perceptions conducted them to have their implicit theories about how music should be changed on their stores depending on the day.

This theory has its explanation on previous researches about weekly variation behavior where it has been said that there are some kind of stereotypes about the different days of the week: "Monday morning is the worst part of the week because it is the first work day after two days of free time, and because four work days follow before the next period of free time. Likewise, Friday evening is the best part of the week because it marks the beginning of an extended period of free time". (Areni, 2008)

#### **5.1.2 Type of music**

The type of music that is played in a certain place can have an important effect on shopping behaviour (Hoyer & Macinnis, 2010). "Likable and familiar music can induce good moods, whereas discordant sounds and music in a disliked style can induce bad moods... bad moods may affect how people feel about products and consumption experiences" (Hoyer & Macinnis, 2010, p. 81). According to the literature about consumer behaviour, the type of music has a very important role and effect on customers, therefore the type of music should be chosen according to the age segment and the target of the store. In this sense, we can say that based on theories or not, most of the big clothing retailers apply these principles.

With our research, we found that depending of the type of store, the music changes as it is explained in the following chart:

	Characteristic of the music	Speed	Volume
Fashionable stores	Modern, popular, party	Mid and Up tempo	Medium
Older-target stores	Calm, classic, retro	Low and Mid tempo	Low - Medium
Alternative	It varies depending on the type of store, e.g., rock, nature, etc.	Low - Mid – Up tempo	Low - High - Medium

**Chart 6.1 Music in the clothing retailers in Sweden according to the type of store.**

The characteristics explained in the chart above are applicable in the majority of the big stores; however in the small ones they don't necessarily follow these roles. Instead there's a bigger factor that influences this decision; this is something we call "the staff factor".

In this study, we refer to the "staff factor" as the influence of the vendors in the music decision according to their likes, preferences and needs. As it has been explained this "staff factor" is stronger in the small retailers than in the large ones.

Thus, due to the circumstances involving the small retailers, managers have failed to apply the theory properly. However this doesn't mean that they are not aware of the fact that music might affect their customers.

### 5.1.3 Volume – Speed

The volume, as can be observed in Chart 5, also changes depending on the type of the store. However, it is important to mention that even though the majority of the stores agreed that high volume is not convenient for their establishment because it might be disruptive to business, in the alternative store category, the "rock" or "punk" stores, the volume was a key element in order to project their image and style.

It was also very common that other stores compared their music with the one playing in this kind of alternatives shops, saying that they would never play this kind of music. There seems to be a pre-conception about heavy rock and techno music. Fashionable stores don't consider this a good type of music to play; however, in certain kind of stores, like alternative ones, this type of music is a very important element for them.

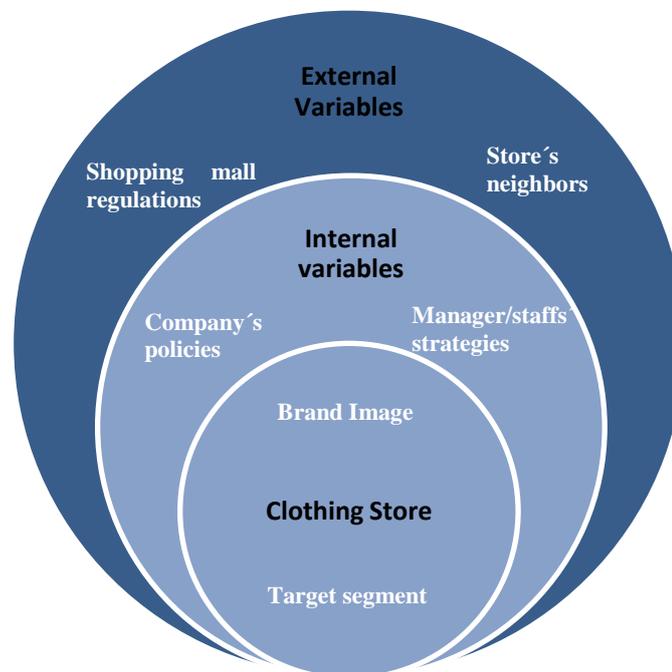
*"It is like we can play techno music but it doesn't do well with customers."*  
 ((Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 15 and up - personal interview))

*“Maybe I cannot play a hard rock or something noo...” (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - grown up - personal interview)*

*“We will never play hard rock or anything like that.” (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)*

Besides the elements mentioned in Chart #5 there is another important element that affects the decision about the volume. This element is also related to the location of the store. Those retailers that have stores in shopping malls have to follow some regulations and rules regarding the music volume in order not to disturb the neighboring stores.

In this sense, taking all the aforementioned external variables that can affect the music decision into account; we could conclude that decisions about music played in the different stores have some internal and external aspects that influence these decisions as it is illustrated below:



**Figure 5. Variables affecting music decision**

In the particular case of the speed, it was interesting to find that some of the respondents tend to vary the speed of the music according to the different moments of the day which is consistent with one of the emergent theories that Areni (2002) found that has to do with the “Circadian Rhythms”

*“We have CD’s and special made for the store and it depends the different time of the day... Yes, it is slowly in the morning and then in the middle of the day it gets more up tempo and in the evening again low tempo.” (Manager- big clothing retailer - women, men, children and babies clothes - all ages - personal interview)*

*“Right now it is a bit fast, but between 12 we have it a bit slow because the old*

*ladies come, after 12 we put it up then at 3 we put it down because is the family time, and the children don't want to hear the BUM BUM BUM so you have to adjust a little bit” (Staff - small clothing retailer - women clothes - all ages - personal interview)*

#### 5.1.4 **The music decision**

As it was mentioned in the empirical results, we found that music decisions can come from the head office, the owner, the manager, outsourcing with another company or the staff.

Most of these sources have been explained in the empirical section, nonetheless there's one element that was also mentioned in the interviews that hasn't been analyzed yet: outsourcing the music decisions with an external company.

In the current study, even though just 9% of the respondents in the large retailers said that the music was outsourced from a specialist company, it's possible that among the 57% that said the music came from the head office, there are more cases of music outsourcing. In some cases, respondents, especially staffs were not sure from where exactly the head office obtained the CD's they give to the different stores.

Nevertheless, what it is clear is that these stores are conscious of the impact of the music and their consumers' and therefore they have decided to invest in it by asking experts to select the best choice for them, which again is related to the results of previous findings that found, for example, that “managers who believed that atmospheric music affects financial performance were more likely to outsource the supply of atmospheric music to a specialist company” (Areni 2002, cited in Areni, 2003)<sup>5</sup>.

The percentage that stated that their stores outsourced the music decision with an external company, also noted that these specialist companies were supposed to take the characteristics of the store into account to create the best suited playlist.

#### 5.1.5 **The music source**

##### 5.1.5.1 **Own channels**

The stores that had their own exclusive radio channels were the big clothing retailers with well known brands. In this sense it could be that this decision is part of a bigger and perhaps more complex positioning strategy from the management.

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<sup>5</sup> Positioning strategy influences managers' beliefs about the impact of atmospheric music on financial performance. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*

Using music as positioning strategy has been used by some of the most famous brands worldwide, so it wouldn't be surprising that the big clothing retailers are following these strategies to affect their customers and their turnovers.

### **5.1.5.2 Radio**

As it was mentioned at the beginning of the analysis, none of the big stores play music from the radio; according to respondents some of the reasons for this are that on the radio they not only play music but also commercials, sometimes they also inform about bad news that can alter customers' mood and perception and besides this they have to pay for the rights.

Respondents mentioned that in Sweden, there's an organization called STIM<sup>6</sup> that is in charge of monitoring the use of music and also is in charge of granting permission to perform music. In the case of the small stores, some of the respondents that said they didn't play any music stated that the reason was that they had to pay for it and therefore couldn't afford this.

### **5.1.5.3 Spotify**

Some of the stores manifest that they have been trying to innovate with the in-store music played in their establishments. For example, we found that some stores are using a software called Spotify. Spotify is a music streaming service created about two years ago that offers the possibility of playing music online for free, create personalized playlists, share music and obtain the latest music updates in real time.

As we mentioned in the background, these and other constant innovations on telecommunications and digital services will also impact the way companies use and implement music in their stores.

## **5.2 Theories**

### **5.2.1 Music influences customers to buy according to the beat of the music**

In accordance with Areni (2003) and his research "Examining theories of how atmospheric music affects perception, behaviour and financial performance" and based on this

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<sup>6</sup> STIM, the Swedish Performing Rights Society, is a non-profit incorporated association owned by those who create music, the authors and the music publishers. STIM administers and licenses rights to music and lyrics on their behalf. STIM works under the Swedish Copyright Act, and is in charge of the administration of the economic rights of the music's authors and publishers; also, grants permission to perform music publicly.

study, the beat of the music refers to low or up tempo music and how this influence customers to do their activities faster or slower.

In line with the aforementioned theory, the beat of the music is related to the speed (fast and low). In this sense, researchers have found that slow tempo music made customers move slower and therefore buy more while fast tempo music accelerated the customers movement making them buy less (Milliman, 1982).

According to the interviews with managers and staff, most of the respondents didn't seem to be aware of the effects of up or slow tempo music on their sales as the theory explains. What they did know was that the tempo could affect their customers and make them feel relaxed and comfortable (in the case of the low tempo) or energetic, active, "in the mood" (in the case of the fast tempo). In both cases they knew that depending on whether the customers liked or not, could make them to stay longer.

### **5.2.2 Music affects customers' perceptions of the atmosphere of an establishment**

Most of the respondents in both big and small clothing retailers agreed that music affects the image that customers have about their establishment, and for some of them this is the most important effect they expect from the music played in their stores. This is the case for the mentioned "alternative store" with a rock or punk style.

These managers and staffs beliefs are aligned with what was explained in the theoretical section about this aspect, where it was mentioned the example of the famous Hard Rock Cafe, and how mechanics cues as music, could help to establish the brand.

Shama and Stafford (2000) say that the environment of a store gives an image of the local in general. In this regard, especially big clothing retailers seem to have this very clear and have placed music as a top priority. Facts such as having their own music channel for all the stores, or hiring a specialized company to decide the type of music that better suits their brands, shows the level of attention that music is having in their business strategy.

### **5.2.3 Music must cater to the references of different age segments**

In the theoretical section, it was shown what the theory says about how music should match with the age of the different targets and how it must be selected in order to fulfill the customers' preferences. In this sense, we found that respondents also have their own implicit theories about this. They think, for example, that young people prefer up tempo music when they are shopping but older people prefer low tempo when they are doing their shops, which is consistent with what was stated by Yalch (1993), for example, that rock and popular music could be listened by teenager while classic music could be preferred by older people.

Unlike the issues raised by Yalch's research, in 1993, about zoning the large stores by playing different kind of music by departments, in the sample of the present study, none of the large stores use this strategy. Instead they play the same music for the whole store even when it is divided by departments according to the genre and/or the age of customers. A possible explanation of this might be the fact that even in the called "large" retailers, the size of the store in term of the area it's not big enough to have different music in the different sections.

In the small stores, even though, music is mostly decided by the staff, some of them said that they also took into account the age segment of their store. In the majority of the small stores for older women, for example, the staff was also from the same age, so, somehow it be could that staff-customers likes coincide.

#### **5.2.4 Music can distract customers from cognitive tasks**

On this aspect, staffs and managers seemed to be aware of the fact that music can distract their customers, especially if this music is not the appropriate, if the volume is very high, if the music doesn't match with the age segment or if the music is recognized by customers.

According to respondents, the first three aforementioned elements not only distract the customers but also annoy them and make them feel uncomfortable, which is what Areni (2003) mention in his study: "background music can distract, and potentially annoy, customers who are engaged in mental tasks". (Areni,2003, p.169). Nevertheless, although the last element mentioned can also distract customers, this could also have a positive effect. One of the staff from a big retailer, explain this theory saying that when you recognize the music and you like it, you concentrate on it and this could make you forget about the time.

#### **5.2.5 Music can convey an upscale or downscale image depending on the specific genre or format**

One of the main theories related to this says that classical music is likely to portray an upscale image (Sirgy, Grewal & Mangelburg, 2000). However, with the exception of a few, respondents didn't seem to agree with this theory.

They said that playing classical music doesn't necessary means that stores have certain status or certain level of prices. Nevertheless some of the stores for young people said that they did think that since the music played was for young people, it might give the impression that is not an expensive store. This is because usually this target is composed mainly of students that might not be able to afford high prices.

On the other hand, stores that sold exclusive brands, say that they tried to play exclusive music, instead of the popular music of the moment. However, they highlighted that they didn't want to be perceived as unattainable stores or to project a too upscale image. As one of the staff of this stores expressed: "*We have exclusive brands, but everyone has to*

*be welcome*". This thinking might have a cultural explanation regarding to the characteristics of the Swedish country where there's high equity level among the population.

### 5.2.6 **Music can make customers stay longer than they otherwise would**

When contrasting theory with managers and staff beliefs regarding this theory, we found that there's a discrepancy between them. Managers and staff of small and big Swedish clothing retailers seemed to agree in the fact that when music was familiar and costumers liked it, they would stay longer and shopped more. However, Yalch and Spangenberg (2002) concluded from their study that "individuals reported themselves as shopping longer when exposed to familiar music but actually shopped longer when exposed to unfamiliar music. Shorter actual shopping times in the familiar music conditions were related to increased arousal. Longer perceived shopping times in the familiar music condition appear related to unmeasured cognitive factors" (p.1)

This means that, due to the fact that familiar music increases arousal, it makes costumers perceive shopping time as longer, even though the real shopping time was shorter. So, according to this, respondents are right when they say that costumers like familiar music, but the effects of this on their shopping behavior are not the one they expressed. It seems that familiar music doesn't make them to shop longer than when exposed to unfamiliar music.

### 5.2.7 **Eliminates unacceptable silences**

Agreeing with theory, most of the respondents in this study indicated that stores in complete silence were a non-acceptable option.

In this sense, some of the arguments of respondents were the fact that in places completely quiet, you could hear every single sound, For example, in the cases of restaurants, the sounds coming from the kitchen, the employees talking etc. This may portray the image that "you are not busy", which in turn might lead to a bad perception about the quality of the place.

In the case of the clothing retailers, respondents indicated that there are special characteristics of this business where unacceptable silence has its effects. They said that when costumers enter to a store:

- They don't want to feel observed or under a lot of pressure to buy something. Therefore music somehow helps to reduce the tension and make them feel more relax. If there's no music and not many costumers, people will feel that the shop is empty and it can make them feel uncomfortable, because they know that the sellers will put all the attention on them:

*"If it is quiet and for example is an empty shop and there is one person here is always that we will get in tension, you know, they will feel like "I'm watching you". But if there is some music is more relax. It's the same if they feel that*

*there are more people in here.” (Staff - big clothing retailer - women clothes - from 15 to older women - personal interview)*

*“Sometimes when is very empty and only one customer and then is good some music” (Staff - small clothing retailer - women clothes - older women - personal interview)*

*“When it’s quite It feels empty and not so happy”. (Staff - big clothing retailer - women, men and juniors clothes - from 15 and up - personal interview)*

- When the person likes any article of clothing and they want to try it, they wouldn’t feel comfortable if the store is completely in silence and they feel that everybody is listening to all the sounds they could emit in the dressing room.

*“They feel more comfortable I think, if they are in the dressing room and it is quiet, we can hear everything so I think they will feel more comfortable with music”. (Manager - small clothing retailer - women clothes - grown up - personal interview)*

#### 5.2.8 **Music makes time pass more quickly when it is enjoyable**

Most of the respondents believed that when customers enjoy the music, they feel comfortable and stay longer because they wouldn’t think about the time. However, experiments showed that the perceived time duration was longer for subjects exposed to their preferred music and shortest for the ones exposed to music not preferred by them. (Kellaris, 1994)

Managers and staffs’ beliefs do not match what previous research has found.

#### 5.2.9 **Music can draw customers into or drive them away from an establishment depending on whether they like it**

Despite what literature says about how important it is for retailers to create an environment that draws customers to their stores and doesn’t let them leave (Sweeney, 2002), in reality, it seems that most of the managers and staff do not think that music, for example, can attract customers to their establishment. The argument they used was that the volume of the music played in their stores was not high enough so customers passing by could hear it and therefore they didn’t enter. There was a case of one rock-image store that actually had speakers outside their establishment for the purpose of drawing customers through the music, but this was the only case.

On the other hand, numerous respondents agreed with the fact that music can make their customers leave right after arriving to the store when they found it annoying.

Another small group of respondents stated that they were implementing new strategies in order to attract more customers; one of these strategies was to bring a DJ to the store

in certain seasons and have a kind of show. They said that the results so far were very positive and that customers liked it.

#### 5.2.10 **Music can facilitate the interaction between customers and staff**

The theory says that selecting the right music for customers and staff might influence their behaviour and attitudes toward a brand and purchase intentions, (Bruner, 1990). When confronting this research with what respondents think about this, it seems that they understand that music not only affect their customers but also affect themselves. In this respect, they say that music works as an ice breaker in order to establish contact and even a relationship with their clients.

They stated, for example, that the music could always be a good excuse to start a short conversation with their customers and that if they had the same music preferences, then the relationship could be even stronger and the probabilities to make a purchase would increase, which again is supported by the academics that have studied the subject such as Dube (1995) and Crosby (1990).

On the other hand, in those stores where the music was given by the head offices every month, they said that sometimes they also got tired of listening the same music and at some point it could annoy them, so when possible they tried change the playlists to play their music.

## 6 Conclusions

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*This chapter presents the analysis of the data obtained through the empirical results. The section will focus on the main points that were found in the empirical section however it is still aligned with the structure of this section. At the end of the chapter a summary and a general evaluation of the current study are presented.*

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### 6.1 Conclusions

This last section contains the main conclusions obtained through the current study according to the two research objectives and purpose stated at the beginning of this paper.

Regarding our first objective “study what clothing retailers are doing in terms of atmospheric music”, we can conclude that:

- The level of systematization vis-à-vis the use of music in clothing retailers increase as the decision is more centralized, and this is directly related to the size of the clothing retailers. It means, that in the big stores, the decision of the music is centralized thus the music decision is systematic, meanwhile, in the small stores where the music decision is decentralized, the music is played in an intuitive way.
- There is a positive relationship between the use of music and the proximity to the large stores. The closer the small clothing shops are to the big ones, the more aware they were of the music and its effect in shopping behavior.
- Besides the normal variables that could affect the decisions about the music played in the clothing retailers, such as brand image, target segment, managerial strategies, etc. there’s one that we have denominated the “staff factor” and refers to the influence that the salespersons has in the music decision according to their likes, preferences and needs. This factor has a greater influence in the small stores however in the big ones this element also has an important influence even when the decision is centralized.

On the subject of the implicit theories about the impact of the music on consumers’ shopping behaviour we can conclude that:

- Similar to Areni’s study findings (2002), managers of the clothing retailers showed a high degree of knowledge about how music affects their customer’s shopping behavior. However, what we were not expecting was that Staff (salespersons) had such a high level of awareness and understanding on the subject. Their explanations and theories were sometimes even more sophisticated and profound than the ones obtained by their managers. A possible explanation for this is that sometimes these people are the ones who have more direct contact with customers and spent most of the time with customer, so their perceptions are based on their daily experiences with their clients in their working environment.
- In regards to the ten theories raised in Areni (2002) that were used in the theoretical framework, tested in the empirical study and analyzed in the last section, it could be concluded that eight of these theories coincide with managers and staffs perception of how music affects costumers, based on their experiences in reality in their clothing stores. However, in two of theories respondents’ implicit

theories didn't match with what it has been found on previous research. These two theories are: "Music can convey an upscale or downscale image depending on the specific genre or format" and "Music can draw customers into or drive them away from an establishment depending on whether they like it". A possible explanation for this is that since Areni's study was conducted in hotels, restaurants and pubs, the characteristics specific of this hospitality sector might have its implications regarding to the use of music that might be different in clothing retailer sector. For example, in the first theory that didn't coincide, we could think that in restaurants and especially in hotels, the projection of an upscale or downscale image is more common than in the clothing stores. About the second theory we could say that this is more applicable to pubs where the music is the main factor to attract customers.

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## Appendix 1

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW MANAGERS-STAFF SHOPPING RETAILERS

#### 1 Music Practices

1.2 Do you play music in your establishment?

- ✓ How often?
- ✓ Why?

1.3 Do you play the same type of music every day?

- ✓ Is there any difference during the weekdays and weekends?

1.4 Which type of music do you play?

- ✓ Genre
- ✓ Format

1.5 How do you manage the music volume? Is it low or loud? Is it in the background or in foreground?

1.6 Do you play fast or slow music? Up-tempo – Low-tempo?

1.7 How frequent you change/update the play list?

1.8 Who decides which kind of music should be played?

- ✓ Head office
- ✓ Store Manager
- ✓ Staff

1.9 Do you have any policy or rule that you should follow in terms of the music you should play, volume, speed, etc.?

1.10 Do you play music from:

- ✓ The radio,
- ✓ mp3 players,
- ✓ Cd
- ✓ Online
- ✓ Other sources

1.11 Do you have to pay for the music you use?

## 2. Theories (Based on Areni, 2002)

- Music Affects shopping Speed
  - ✓ According to your experience, do you consider that your costumers' behavior is influenced by the music speed?
  - ✓ Do you consider that certain type of music speeds up the shoppers/shopping time?

*Playing up-beat music speeds up the behavior of shoppers*

*Customer shop more quickly when up-tempo music is playing in the background.*

*Shop's turnover increases when faster tempo music is played.*

*Customers finish their shops sooner when fast, up-tempo background music is being played.*

- Music Creates the Right Atmosphere
  - ✓ Do you consider that the atmosphere of your store attract new costumers?
  - ✓ Do you consider that the image of you establishments could be affected by the music decision in your store
- Music Must Cater to Age Segment Preferences
  - ✓ What are your criteria for selecting the appropriate music for your costumers?
  - ✓ Do you take into account the age segment of your target in order to take decisions about the music played in your establishment?

*Music must cater to the age group of the typical customer.*

*Most customers like to listen to music that was/is popular in their generation.*

*The selection of appropriate background music depends on the ages of the costumers.*

*Customers from different age groups prefer different kinds of background music.*

- Music Distracts Customers from Mental Tasks
  - ✓ According to your experience: Do you consider that music could be a source of distraction for your costumers?

*Background music distracts customers from their conversations.*

*Customers that are trying to focus on mental activities are distracted by background music.*

*It is difficult to concentrate on something when background music is playing.*

*Customers get annoyed by background music because it distracts them from what they want to do.*

- Music Draws Customers into an Establishment
  - ✓ According to past experiences, do you consider that depending on the music customers could be attracted to enter into the store?
  - ✓ How do you think that is the music played here, do customers like it?
  - ✓ Have you perceived that some music could make customers to feel disturb so they prefer to leave?

*Playing the right kind of music brings customers into an establishment.*

*Customers leave when they don't like the music.*

*Music is a critical factor that draws customers into an establishment or drives them off.*

*It is important to choose the right kind of music to entice customers to come in.*

- Classical Music Conveys an Upscale Image
  - ✓ According to your personal opinion; Do you think that certain kind music could be related with pricey stores?
  - ✓ What about classical music? What image do you consider your customers perceive when classical music is being played?, Do you think they could relate this kind of music with high quality ?

*People associate classical music with high priced merchandise.*

*To create an exclusive or prestigious image, it is important that classical music is played in the background.*

*Classical music immediately gives an establishment an up-market feel.*

*Customers expect an establishment to offer relatively expensive items if they hear classical music playing in the background.*

- Music Makes Customers Stay Longer
  - ✓ Do you think that music could lead to more time spent by customers into the store if the music is the right kind?

*Playing the right kind of music makes customers stay longer than they otherwise would.*

*Customers linger on longer if the right kind of music is being played.*

*Customers spend more time in an establishment when they like the music.*

*Customers sometimes stick around just to listen to the music.*

- Music Eliminates Unacceptable Silence
  - ✓ According to your personal point of view; What do you think costumers feel when they enter into a store that is completely quiet?

- ✓ Do you think this can affect the quality perception of the store?

*Silence in an establishment gives the impression that it is dead.*

*Customers question the quality of an establishment if there is no music.*

*Silence means an establishment is empty and unpopular.*

*An establishment becomes very uninviting without background music.*

- Enjoyable Music Makes Time Pass Quickly

- ✓ According to what you have seen, do you perceived that music make time pass more quickly when is enjoyable for you and also for your customers?

- ✓ Conversely, do you think that bad music makes you and your customers feel that time is dragging on?

*Time passes more quickly when customers have enjoyable music to listen to.*

*Time passes slowly if customers dislike the background music.*

*When listening to music that I like, time seems to fly by.*

*Listening to music that I dislike makes me feel like the time is dragging on.*

- Music facilitates customer-staff interaction

- ✓ Do you think that music facilitate the interaction with your customers?

- ✓ How do you think that is the interaction between salesperson and customers in the presence of music?

- ✓ Would it be different the interaction if no music is played? How?

- ✓ Do you think that customers would feel more confident to interact with the staff in the store is the music is on and is enjoyable?

*Enjoyable background music makes customers feel more comfortable approaching staff and asking questions.*

*Customers are less shy about seeking staff and asking for help when the background music is likeable.*

*Pleasing music facilitates customer-employee interaction.*

*Customers are more likely to ask for information when they like the music playing in the background.*